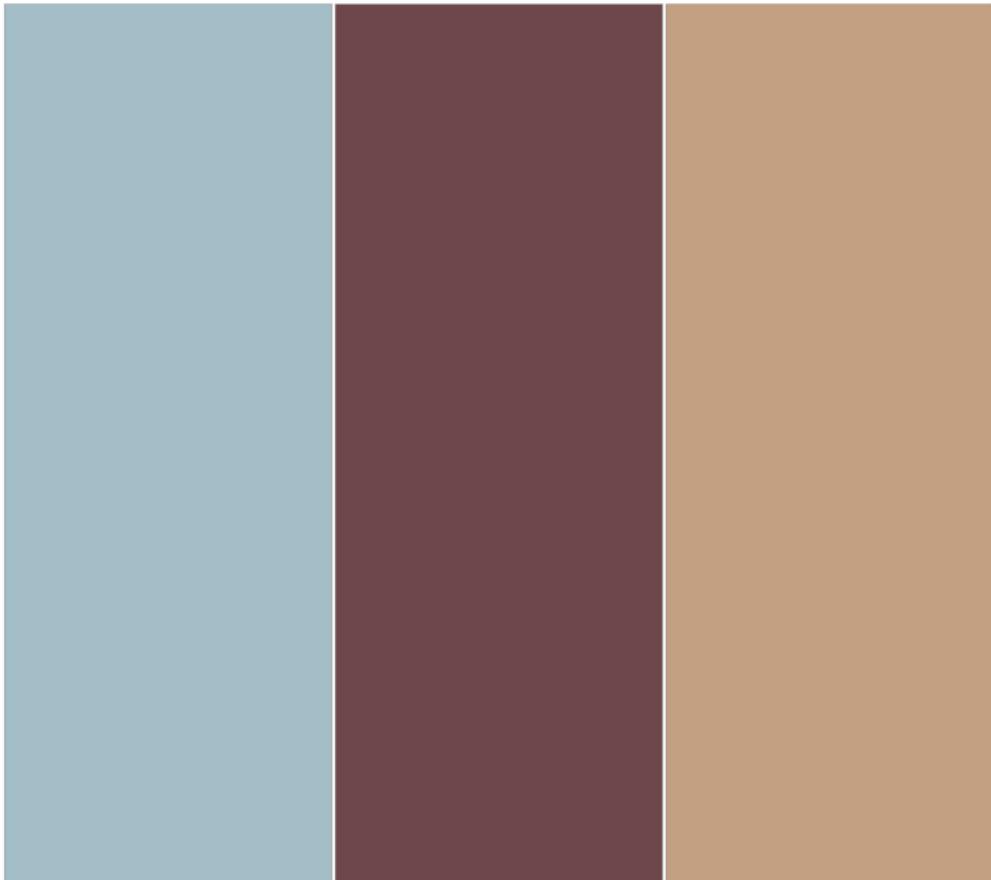




NOTES ON DIALECTICS

HEGEL ~ MARX ~ LENIN

C.L.R. James



Notes on Dialectics, probably the key work in the development of C.L.R.. James's thinking, was written in 1948, and though its influence has been deeply felt through privately circulated mimeographed editions, this is its first publication in book form, with a new introduction by the author.

James aims at making Hegel's Logic – a thorough study of which Lenin saw as essential for understanding Marx's Capital – 'a part of our marxist thinking today'. Close textual and explanatory reference to the Science of Logic itself, and to Marx's and Lenin's use of 'dialectic', provide a conceptual framework for examining the history of the workers' movement and the Internationals; and James concludes that Trotsky's marxism, that of the Fourth International, was inadequate for the post-war world.

This book's central and prophetic concerns – the revolutionary nature of the proletariat, the state and the party – are just as important in the present world crisis as they were when it was first written.

'C.L.R.. James is one of those rare individuals whom history proves right. It is more than a misjudgement to think of him as a black professor, as a black historian, or indeed as the premier intellectual product of the West Indies. To think of him as such is to circumscribe and to limit the achievements of one of the marxist thinkers of our time who has kept the thread of the marxist science weaving through the internationalist concerns of a lifetime' – Race Today

'One of this century's most genuine Socialists' – Labour Weekly

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Notes on Dialectics

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Introduction

The identity of opposites (it would be more correct to say their “unity”—although the difference between the terms identity and unity is not particularly important here. In a certain sense both are correct) is the recognition (discovery) of the contradictory, mutually exclusive, opposite tendencies in all phenomena and processes of nature (including mind and society). The condition for the knowledge of all processes of the world in their “self-movement”, in their spontaneous development, in their real life, is the knowledge of them as a unity of opposites. The two basic (or two possible? or two historically observable?) conceptions of development (evolution) are: development as decrease and increase, as repetition, and development as a unity of opposites (the division of a unity into mutually exclusive opposites and their reciprocal relation).

The above is a reproduction of a paragraph from Lenin's 1915 article *On the Question of Dialectics*, which I had been familiar with for nearly fifteen years. We* had broken with Trotsky's analysis of the nature of the Russian state since the death of Lenin and I had at my disposal translations by one collaborator of all that Lenin had written on *Capital*, on philosophy and on the Russian state; and in translations by another collaborator all of Hegel and Marx in German on philosophy and political economy. Marx had not been able to write the small treatise that he had intended on the Hegelian dialectic. We came to the conclusion that a fundamental investigation still remained to be done, on Hegel's *Science of Logic* (with that of course had to be associated the smaller *Logic*, a section of Hegel's *Encyclopedia*).

The Johnson-Forest Tendency of the Fourth International. (For a description of this tendency, see W. Jerome and A. Buick, “Soviet State Capitalism? The History of an Idea”, in *Survey* no. 62, January 1967.)

In the midst of his studies on the *Logic* Lenin had come to the conclusion that you could not understand *Capital* without an understanding of the *Hegelian Logic* and had stated semi-humorously:

Aphorism: It is impossible completely to understand Marx's *Capital*, and especially its first chapter, without having thoroughly studied and understood the whole of Hegel's *Logic*. Consequently, half a century later none of the marxists understood Marx.

This he enclosed in a box, and we presume a conscientiously humorous modification of the stern judgement by the two exclamation marks with which he ended the aphorism.

For many years my friends and I were very conscious that Lenin in the hectic months of September to December 1914 wrote on *The Science of Logic* what ultimately filled a hundred and fifty-six printed pages of his Collected Works. My friends and I sought in vain for any treatment of the *Logic* which went further than a presumed summary of its relation to Marx's method in general. (That is not altogether surprising, because the two volumes of the larger and the volume of the smaller constitute over a thousand of the most difficult pages we have yet met anywhere.) I was able to find a way into it and even to speculate, i.e. draw temporary conclusions from it, because I recognized from early on that the *Logic* constituted an algebra, made to be used in any analysis of constitution and development in nature or in society. To hand was the knowledge of the history of the labour movement beginning in 1789 and continuing to our day. For us active marxists that analysis centred on three names: Marx (and Engels), Lenin, and Trotsky. So that when we worked on the *Logic* we were able to understand its movement by testing this movement against the history of the labour movement and, conversely, the movement of the *Logic* enabled us to understand and develop for contemporary and future needs the history of the labour movement.

It would be idle to attempt to summarize this process in any introductory statement. This volume is summary enough. A few things, however, can be usefully said. Early in the *Logic* Hegel lays it down: "In my view—a view which developed exposition of the system can alone justify—everything depends on grasping and expressing the ultimate truth not as Substance but as Subject as well." It is absolutely true, as Hegel warns, that only the developed exposition of the system can justify what everything depends on. Nevertheless with the ultimate truth not only as Substance (objective reality) but as Subject (Mind) we can tackle empirically that formidable paragraph with which we began. It is obvious that there we are dealing with the spontaneous development of processes in real life, obvious also that any stage of these processes is a unity, consisting of opposites which are mutually exclusive but though unified are yet historically observable.

The next stage in the development (evolution) consists in the gathering strength of one of the opposites so that it overcomes the other, embraces it, and itself becomes the basis of a new stage in the Substance, in which the Subject, equally developing, is able to distinguish the new unity of further opposites.

What matters, events, things, personalities are historically observable? If we are analysing society we will note certain mass impulses, instinctive actions, spontaneous movements, the emergence of personalities, the incalculable

activities which constitute a society. At a certain stage these apparently indeterminate activities coalesce into a hard knot “which are foci of arrest and direction in mental life and consciousness”. That knot constitutes the basis of new Substance. When the elements harden into a knot, Mind, Subject, can enter. Mind will observe, said Hegel, that the knot consists of two antagonistic elements locked together in a unity. But it cannot remain as such. In a new historical period there are further impulses, instinctive actions, spontaneous movements, the emergence of personalities, calculable activities whereupon another knot is formed giving the basis to Subject, Mind, opportunity for further analysis. It is along these lines we can examine the First International. This knot consists essentially of mobilization of the mass, and intellectual clarification by those who through ability, energy and aims constitute the leadership. Marx himself (Mind) lays down the principles and supervises the organization.

After another historical period of indeterminate activities we arrive at the Second International, which distinguished itself from the First International by the organization and power of the leadership, in trade unions and labour parties. The leadership moves away from its marxist origin and concentrates on itself. “The movement”, said Bernstein, “is everything.”

After another historical period Lenin organizes the Third International, in form another leadership organization opposed to the leadership of the Second International. After a period both these organizations decay into opportunist groups with neither historical nor organizational perspective, in particular Eurocommunism. It is obvious that what the three Internationals in their turn were seeking is now wide open and more than ever needed.

Hegel insists that the importance of dialectic is the capacity to speculate into the future. What does the *Logic* tell us about Subject, except (as we have already stated) that Subject is to be analysed as strenuously as Substance? Here there is room for only one indication of method. The two elements of a stage of Substance must be examined as two independent unities. Hegel first labels them unities of Imagination. The dialectic further analyses the parts as being reflected into one another, still part of a unity but one part reflected into another. We understand the word reflected when we face the third method of analysing the opposites. This entails a recognition that the two parts of the unity are in violent opposition, contradiction, to each other. It is when Subject realizes that “Contradiction” is a fundamental principle of all life, that it jams the opposites together and so unlooses (in speculative thought) inherent movement. The idea, thus logically divined, is the Ideality of the next stage of reality.

Where is the *Logic* taking us? The end, Hegel insists, is the beginning, although you can understand that beginning only when you approach the end.

What is then the beginning of the labour movement? We find the historical beginning in the French revolution as Marx saw it. Here are some of his statements about the revolution. The masses went “as far as the suppression of private property, to the maximum of confiscation”. Furthermore they placed themselves “in violent contradiction with the very conditions of existence of bourgeois society (by) declaring the revolution permanent”. Its ultimate aim is self-mobilization. The opposite which at every stage the labour movement meets and must overcome is the developing capitalist society. Stage by stage the new expresses itself instinctively in Substance to be organized intellectually by Subject, Mind. Ultimately the new developing reality faces an opposition with which it must engage in mortal struggle. This stage the *Logic* describes as Actuality. In the self-mobilization that the Labour movement has been seeking, its ultimate obstacle (perpetuated under Brezhnev) turns out to be the Russian regime and the communist parties. It is the last opposition to be overcome. Stalinism is not an accident. To quote Hegel:

In the course of its process the idea creates the illusion, by setting an antithesis to confront it; and its action consists in getting rid of the illusion which it has created. Only out of this error does the truth arise. In this fact lies the reconciliation with error and with finitude. Error or other-being, when superseded, is still a necessary dynamic element of truth: for truth can only be where it makes itself its own result.

Truth can only be where it makes itself its own result. Truth, in our analysis, the total emancipation of labour, can only be achieved when it contains and overcomes its complete penetration by its inherent antagonism, the capital relation.

At this stage of Actuality in the labour movement I come inevitably to the conclusion that there was no further place in the labour movement for the party. The party as such had to be negated. The one-party state is the incorporation into bourgeois, capitalist society of the nearly two-hundred-year-old efforts by the labour movement to create a party to take over the state. Instead the state takes over the party. In 1946 for example in Italy the party consisted of two and a half million members and was in complete control of the organized labour movement. If the revolution had continued, the two and a half million would rapidly have become at least six or seven million, and a party which consists of six or seven million members is not a party at all. It automatically becomes the state: the state has withered away into the party. Unless the labour movement arrives at the abolition of the party, the state will never wither away.

There is only one warning to be borne in mind. Hegel warns us that the

logical development and transition of subject, Mind, does not always find its reality in Substance. I therefore, having arrived at a perspective for the future, embarked upon what I call the “historical tendency” and traced historically the labour movement and its party from 1789 to the present day and its future perspective. What is astonishing is not how little Subject is reproduced in reality, but the miracle in which mutually exclusive opposite tendencies in their self—movement and development, in their unity of opposites, embodied historical reality.

Part I

Hegel's Preface to the First Edition of *The Science of Logic*

Let us begin by looking at the Preface to *The Science of Logic*. (This is henceforth referred to as the larger *Logic*; some years later Hegel wrote what we call the smaller *Logic*, a brief summary which forms part of Hegel's *Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*.) What is Hegel trying to do? He is talking about new ideas. His dialectic is new, a new way of organizing thought. Not of thinking. But of knowing what you do when you think.

Imperceptibly the new ideas became familiar even to their opposers, who appropriated them and—though persistently slighting and gainsaying the sources and principles of those ideas—yet had to accept their results, and were unable to evade their influence. The only way opposers could give content and positive value to their negative attitude (which was getting to be of even less importance) was by giving in their adherence to the new ways of thinking.¹

We can see this is *our* whole development. The chief, or one of the most striking examples is our application of the law of value to the Russian economy. Today these God-damned scoundrels all turn up and say “of course”! But you could look through the literature of the Fourth International for pages and pages. I do not remember any statements to that effect.

But in *politics* that is not enough, if it is enough anywhere. Our opponents are stuck in their own roots. They adopt ideas, but they remain stuck in their own “sources and principles” and they use the new ideas solely for argument’s sake and to preserve their own position. Over and over again I see them doing it. It is testimony, however, to the strength of our new ideas. We never had to take anything from them—never. This should be observed.

Hegel is very wise. See again how he distinguished between different stages of development of a new system of ideas:

On the other hand, the period of fermentation with which a new creation begins seems to be past.²

(I think it is the same in our case. The period was 1940-46.)

At its first appearance such a period generally wears an aspect of fanatical hostility towards the prevalent systemization of the older principle.

Look at the above quote. When the idea that Russia was state capitalist began in the old days, the group was fanatical and eaten up with itself. Why?

It (the group) is also, partly, fearful of losing itself in the wilderness of particulars details, let us say while it shuns the labour required for scientific development, and in its need of such a development grasps, at first, at an empty formalism.

Yes, the old state capitalists shunned the labour, and were formalistic. It is good to see that these events follow a course of development. The need for digestion and development of the new knowledge becomes urgent as against this formalism. Hegel then says that this period in a development demands that we require and maintain the principle in its undeveloped intensity. "But," he concludes, "the higher requirement is that the principle should be elaborated into systematized knowledge."

We have done just that and now, almost automatically, we have arrived at a stage where we feel the necessity of systematizing the knowledge. That is exactly what these notes are going to try to do. Later we shall see that is itself a dialectical development. The abstract statement of a principle, the filling it out with an objective content; the logical systematization; being, essence, notion.

Now read the whole paragraph and grasp it:

On the other hand, the period of fermentation with which a new creation begins seems to be past. At its first appearance such a period generally wears an aspect of fanatical hostility toward the prevalent systematization of the older principle; it is also, partly, fearful of losing itself in the wilderness of particulars while it shuns the labour required for scientific development, and in its need of such a development grasps, at first, at an empty formalism. The demand for the digestion and development of the material now becomes so much the more pressing. This is a period in the development of an age, as in the development of an individual, when the chief business is to acquire and maintain the principle in its undeveloped intensity. But the higher requirement is that the principle should be elaborated into systematized knowledge.

We recognize ourselves, I hope. Let us learn to observe objective process in our own development. That is a sure cure for narcissism and subjectivity in regard to ourselves and to others.

Let us now jump a little. Still prefacing, Hegel says:

But it is the nature of the content and that alone which lives and stirs in philosophic cognition, while it is the very reflection of the content, which itself originates and determines the nature of philosophy.

This is the key to the Hegelian dialectic and therefore to marxist thinking. We shall meet it again and again, and shall take it from every point of view until we get it. Thought is not an instrument you apply to a content. The content moves, develops, changes and creates new categories of thought, and gives them direction. It is easy enough to see this, on the surface, when we say bourgeois society, capitalistic civilization, produced Spinoza, Kant, Hegel, Bentham, etc. But philosophic cognition is not the study of philosophy. It is, for Hegel, cognition of any object. Here, and all through this, I am chiefly going to be concerned with the labour movement. This will be our object. Philosophic cognition of it means. not philosophy about it, but a correct cognition, a correct grasp of it, in its movement. The labour movement takes certain forms, Commune, the Second International, the Third, unions, CIO, IWW, etc. These are (1) international above all. But (2) they express this essential internationalism in national form. It is an international movement that takes national *form*, each form being peculiar to the nation; but the basic laws are international because labour is an international "object". But it is the nature of labour, its development, changes and decisive forms in various countries that enable us to think, clarify, and develop a philosophic cognition about the object: international labour. Labour acts empirically and then its innumerable acts crystallize in a formed movement, an organization, a category. One such category is a revolutionary international. Once that takes place, a new development has been added to thought. The CIO cannot be seen by anybody (the AFL too) except in relation to a revolutionary international. You can, of course, like labour bureaucrats, refuse to recognize this. But their thoughts and actions are governed by it never the less.

Now one of the chief errors of thought is to continue to think in one set of forms, categories, ideas, etc., when the object, the content, has moved on, has created or laid the premises for an extension, a development of thought. A philosophic cognition means a cognition in which the categories of thought are adequate to the object it is thinking about. It has nothing to do with Kant or Hegel. When a worker says, "I'll be damned. In 1914 we had a labour international that said it was against private property and said it would not

support national defence. Yet when the time came it did all these things and persecuted and cheated the workers and kept them down. In 1939 we had another international. This one said it was against private property and it said that it was against national defence. It actually showed too that it meant these things. But still it persecutes and cheats the workers and keeps them down,” that is a philosophic cognition. He recognizes that the persecuting, cheating, suppressing internationals can act very differently on fundamental things and yet be in essence the same. But when a philosopher says: “We are not Kantians. We are dialecticians of the school of Hegel developed by Marx. And this dialectic teaches us that because the new international persecutes the workers and cheats and suppresses them then you will see that it will protect private property and join the bourgeoisie just as the old one did, because that is the way persecuting, cheating internationals behave”, that, my friends, is a very unphilosophical cognition.

That is our theme; we know the facts already. But to think about them, how the mistake of the philosopher was made, we shall go at it again and again. In the smaller *Logic*, Hegel says very calmly: “Usually no suspicion attaches to the finite forms of thought; they are allowed to pass unquestioned.”³

We say: revolutionary international, reformist international. These are “finite”, fixed, concrete, clear. We know what they mean. Do we? “But it is from conforming to finite categories in thought and action that all deception originates”⁴ You are going to hear this often before we are done. You will be sick of it, and then it will jerk your attention up once again.

UNDERSTANDING AND REASON

There is a philosophical term in Hegel for thinking in finite categories. He calls it Understanding. When you recognize that the categories of thought are not finite but move, and when you know *how and why they move*, then your method is the method of Reason. Don’t think you know that categories move. You don’t. You just don’t until you know how and why. You must be patient and *humble*. Hegel says it a thousand times. *All* error, in thought and action, comes from this. *All* error. *All*. He is right, so we will, if you please, look and stop and look again and in and out and in and out and round and about, constantly setting off in different directions from the same spot.

“Understanding makes determinations and maintains them,”⁵ says Hegel, still in the Preface. A determination is a category. Reformist international is one determination. Revolutionary international is another, etc.

Kant believed that the ego, the human intellect, the thought-organization, possessed, consisted of a certain number of categories of thought. It perceived

events and objects by sensation, feeling, intuition, and filled these into the different categories, and made order and sense. This Hegel calls the stage of Understanding for to Kant the categories did not move.

Let us *transfer* this to the labour movement. (These transfers are rough but Hegel intended them to be made. That is precisely what logic is, an algebra, but an algebra in constant movement.) “Categories” of the labour movement are, I repeat, union, reformist party, reformist international; revolutionary party, revolutionary international, etc.

Now Kant, says Hegel, did not look to see *where* his categories came from, he just took them over from the old logic. He did not see that the categories *developed* out of one another, in a consistent movement, of opposition and resolution of opposition, and were all connected. He did not see, that at critical moments, a new category appeared because the old categories could no longer contain the new content. What Kant did in philosophy, others do in other spheres of intellectual life. So this *type* of thinking needs examination. Why does it arise? If it is persisted in, what happens? Hegel says we can see it, know it and know in advance the errors it will make, *wherever it appears*.

“Understanding makes determinations and maintains them.”⁶ There is a reformist international, Mensheviks, a revolutionary international, Bolsheviks, there are general strikes, soviets (1917 model), a Bolshevik party, etc. We fit what we perceive into these categories. At every plenum we study them, we clarify them, and we change them a little. In reality, the old categories hold us by the throat, especially *thinkers*. The Russian revolution of February caused violent changes in Lenin’s categories. World War I set him revising the categories of the Second International. You can for years at plenums and conventions develop and clarify and objectivize the subjective and subjectivize the objective and make a truly grand display of movement and opposition and so on, only to show by 1938, and to have exposed in 1941 that all our conceptions of revolutionary and reformist internationals of 1940 were the same old ones we had in 1917. *We*. But even this category, *we*, can be a finite, fixed determination or a dialectical category of Reason (caught you that time with everything down. I *warned* you to be careful). Yes. Let us examine “*we*”. For one thing many of us splitters had *at the back of our minds* that the Stalinists were going to support Stalin. Nobody said so. But it played a part in our calculations. So the “*we*” who still supported Leon Trotsky’s views in 1940 were not the “*we*” who did so in 1938. But nothing was said. It took us six years after the fact to clarify this matter and show what was the importance of this in Trotsky’s calculations. No, the error of errors is to *begin* by believing you *know* that categories change. To say that, to think that, implies that you know that categories change and Trotsky didn’t. He would have been able to lecture you on changing categories most profoundly. He talked about it all the time. But fixed and finite determinations held him by the throat to the end.

What we have to do therefore is to make one great experience of thinking in terms of Understanding and thinking about the same object in terms of Reason. We have the *Logic*, we have our experience with trotskyism. Let us master them, testing one by the other. I can go so far as to say that in the marxist movement, if you and some other person or group, consistently clash in your estimate of some object, some problem, then one is right, he is using Reason, and the other, probably, Understanding. There are various degrees of Understanding and Reason but the dividing line is clear. In fact Hegel says there are three broad divisions of cognition.

1. Simple, everyday, common sense, vulgar empiricism, ordinary perception.
2. Understanding.
3. Dialectic.

And, holy heaven preserve us, *if* you do not get out to Dialectic and stay in Understanding too long, you tumble right back into empiricism and common sense. Again the *Logic* tells you how and why.

REASON

Let us have a closer look, a general look at Reason, or the dialectical method as opposed to Understanding.

It follows that the categories are no fit terms to express the absolute—the absolute not being given in perception.⁷

You cannot see the absolute, perceive it by *common sense* and observation. It is not there to be examined and apprehended by any category. It is the creation of Reason, “and Understanding or Knowledge by means of the categories, is consequently incapable of knowing the Things-in-Themselves.”⁸ Let us call the Things-in-Themselves, for the time being, absolute reality, things as they really and comprehensively are. (By the way, I am doing injustice to Kant, I am sure, and committing crimes against philosophical terminology.)

Hegel has another name for Reason. He calls it “speculative truth”, a marvellous phrase. You speculate, you create truth. Notice how he constantly finds opposition in the very phrases. For ordinary man, truth is the reverse of speculation.

In the smaller *Logic*, he says, as bold as brass, but without heat, “Speculative truth, it may also be noted, means very much the same as what, in special

connection with religious experiences and doctrines, used to be called "Mysticism"⁹ Isn't that something? Shachtman and his friends regularly called me "a mystic". The fool hath uttered wiser than he knew.

It says, "there is mystery in the mystical, only however for the Understanding which is ruled by the principle of abstract identity; whereas the mystical, as synonymous with speculative, is the concrete unity of those propositions which understanding only accepts in their separation and opposition."

We, the great revolutionaries, have been accused of "mysticism". It is no accident. Hegel says that men of Understanding do not understand that when they take the determinations as they are, they renounce "thought"; the determinations become "fixed elements and swing around into its opposite.... Reasonableness, on the contrary, just consists in embracing within itself these opposites as unsubstantial elements." Assume that they will pass away. You must. That is Reason. His combination of Reason as mysticism and then as "reasonableness" is calm and superbly ironic.

The full quote is as follows: the maestro at his best and most understandable:

Speculative truth, it may also be noted, means very much the same as what, in special connection with religious experience and doctrines, used to be called "Mysticism". The term "Mysticism" is at present used, as a rule, to designate what is mysterious and incomprehensible: and in proportion as their general culture and way of thinking vary, the epithet is applied by one class to denote the real and the true, by another to name everything connected with superstition and deception. On which we first of all remark that there is mystery in the mystical, only however for the understanding which is ruled by the principle of abstract identity; whereas the mystical, as synonymous with the speculative, is the concrete unity of those propositions, which understanding only accepts in their separation and opposition. And if those who recognize "Mysticism" as the highest truth are content to leave it in its original utter mystery, their conduct only proves that for them too, as well as for their antagonists, thinking means abstract identification, and that in their opinion, therefore, truth can only be won by renouncing thought, or as it is frequently expressed, by leaving the reason captive. But, as we have seen, the abstract thinking of understanding is so far from being either ultimate or stable, that it shows a perpetual tendency to work its own dissolution and swing round into its opposite. Reasonableness, on the contrary, just consists in embracing within itself these opposites as unsubstantial elements. Thus the reason-world may be equally styled "mystical", not however because thought cannot both reach and comprehend it, but merely because it lies beyond the compass of understanding.

But, being humble and patient and inquiring, we ask, why should some use common sense or empirical perception, and some Understanding and some

Dialectic? It is a question we shall touch upon as far as necessary, more in the later sections than here. But here again these categories as categories of thought will surprise us. They are not separate. They are connected. No man can think at all without this simple “perception”, the data of the senses, called sometimes intuition. But if you stay there, you get lost. You must break out of these fixed, limited finite categories of sense, and you analyse, you so to speak classify. You get a fine new set of thoughts and you fix sense data in those thoughts. A genuine empiricist sees the CIO as something that happened. It came, that's all. A labour party? “I don't think American workers will ever have one,” he says. Understanding, however, thinks in terms of First International, Second International, Third International, in embryo. Hegel says that you need Understanding! You can't go a step without it. You must have things fixed, in their categories, finite, limited. exact. All scientific thought must do this. Until you fix things in thought, in their precise limited finite form, Second International, Third (Lenin and his 21 points), you cannot move a step. You can't begin to discuss. Strange, isn't it, from a man who has been belabouring Understanding. This cognition is called Synthetic. It is associated. with Kant. Understanding, therefore, is very important. Watch it again. It is a form of negation. It does not take objects as common sense or label them, just as they are. It categorizes them, puts them in order, divides them into precise and limited, finite parts and groups. It negates their immediate common sense aspect. It is a great step forward. So that Understanding is dialectic to the extent that it negates. But precisely because it does not at once begin negating the determinations it has made it leads its user into trouble. He must move on to “mysticism”, reason, speculative truth. It is because Understanding is a necessary. stage that it is so dangerous. And note that it gets into trouble because the great sin of analytic cognition is repeated by Synthetic Understanding when it makes logical determinations, thinks them out and keeps them permanent! It creates universals, a great stage in thought, but the universals it creates assume permanence. They therefore remain abstract. Now listen to the maestro in the smaller *Logic*, a long passage but characteristic of the late Hegel:

In our ordinary usage of the term thought and even notion, we often have before our eyes nothing more than the operation of Understanding. And no doubt thought is primarily an exercise of Understanding: only it goes further, and the notion is not a function of Understanding merely. The action of Understanding may be in general described as investing its subject-matter with the form of universality. But this universal is an abstract universal: that is to say, its opposition to the particular is so rigorously maintained, that it is at the same time also reduced to the character of a particular again. In this separating and abstracting attitude towards its objects, Understanding is the reverse of immediate perception and sensation, which, as such, keep completely to their native sphere of action in the concrete. It is by referring to this opposition of

Understanding to sensation or feeling that we must explain the frequent attacks made upon thought for being hard and narrow, and for leading, if consistently developed, to ruinous and pernicious results. The answer to these charges, in so far as they are warranted by their facts is that they do not touch thinking in general, certainly not the thinking of Reason, but only the exercise of Understanding. It must be added however, that the merit and rights of the mere Understanding should unhesitatingly be admitted. And that merit lies in the fact that apart from Understanding there is no fixity or accuracy in the region either of theory or of practice. Thus, in theory, knowledge begins by apprehending existing objects in their specific differences. In the study of nature, for example, we distinguish matters, forces, genera and the like, and stereotype each in its isolation. Thought is here acting in its analytic capacity, where its canon is identity, a simple reference of each attribute to itself. It is under the guidance of the same identity that the process in knowledge is effected from one scientific truth to another. Thus, for example, in mathematics magnitude is the feature which, to the neglect of any other, determines our advance. Hence in geometry we compare one figure with another, so as to bring out their identity. Similarly in other fields of knowledge, such as jurisprudence, the advance is primarily regulated by identity. In it we argue from one specific law or precedent to another: and what is this but to proceed on the principle of identity? But Understanding is as indispensable in practice as it is in theory. Character is an essential in conduct, and a man of character is an understanding man, who in that capacity has definite ends in view and undeviatingly pursues them. The man who will do something great must learn, as Goethe says, to limit himself. The man who, on the contrary, would do everything, really would do nothing, and fails. There is a host of interesting things in the world: Spanish poetry, chemistry, politics, and music are all very interesting, and if anyone takes an interest in them we need not find fault. But for a person in a given situation to accomplish anything, he must stick to one definite point, and not dissipate his forces in many directions. In every calling, too, the great thing is to pursue it with understanding. Thus the judge must stick to the law, and give his verdict in accordance with it, undeterred by one motive or another, allowing no excuses, and looking neither left nor right. Understanding, too, is always an element in thorough training. The trained intellect is not satisfied with cloudy and indefinite impressions, but grasps the objects in their fixed character: whereas the uncultivated man wavers unsettled, and it often costs a deal of trouble to come to an understanding with him on the matter under discussion, and to bring him to fix his eye on the definite point in question. It has been already explained that the Logical principle in general, far from being merely a subjective action in our minds, is rather the very universal, which as such is also objective. This doctrine is illustrated in the case of understanding, the first form of logical truths. Understanding in this larger sense corresponds to what we call the goodness of God, so far as that means that finite things are and subsist. In nature, for example, we recognize the goodness of God in the fact that the various classes or species of animals and plants are provided with whatever they need for their preservation and welfare. Nor is man excepted, who, both as an individual and as a nation, possesses partly in the given circumstances of climate, of quality and products of soil, and partly in his natural parts or talents, all that is

required for his maintenance and development. Under this shape Understanding is visible in every department of the objective world; and no object in that world can ever be wholly perfect which does not give full satisfaction to the canons of understanding. A state, for example, is imperfect, so long as it has not reached a clear differentiation of orders and callings, and so long as those functions of politics and government, which are different in principle, have not evolved for themselves special organs, in the same way as we see, for example, the developed animal organism provided with separate organs for the functions of sensation, motion, digestion, etc.¹⁰

Then we skip a bit, and get to:

It is usually added that Understanding must not go too far. Which is so far correct, that Understanding is not an ultimate, but on the contrary finite, and so constituted that when carried to extremes it veers round to its opposite. It is the fashion of youth to dash about in abstractions: but the man who has learnt to know 'life steers clear of the abstract "either—or", and keeps to the concrete. On the Dialectical stage these finite characterizations or formulae supersede themselves, and pass into their opposites.¹¹

Good? Good. I hope so. Because we shall now go back to the Preface of the larger *Logic*. Here is Hegel in a concentrated mood, as he too often is. Take the passage clause by clause: "Understanding makes determinations and maintains them."¹² That we know. "Reason is negative and dialectical because it dissolves into nothing the determinations of Understanding." That we know too. "Reason is positive because it is the source of the Universal in which the Particular is comprehended."

There you get the distinction in Reason which on the one hand negates the determinations of Understanding and at the same time *creates* a higher truth by speculation. So that Reason is both negative and positive. As Understanding negates the ordinary data of sense, "analytical thought", and creates the determinations of Understanding, so Reason is both negative and creative, both of them creating Universals. But we may say that Understanding creates a Universal and sticks to it so that it becomes abstract while with Reason, no sooner is a universal created than it breaks up. Ah! yes, but how? It breaks it up and creates a new, a more adequate universal. The universal of Reason today is by tomorrow the Universal of Understanding.

Just as Understanding is commonly held to be something separate from Reason regarded generally, so dialectical reason is held to be something separate from positive Reason.

Hegel is hammering away at the interconnectedness of things and each new one comes from the old, bad, discarded one, which was necessary. Furthermore, each category has two sides, positive and negative. Because Reason negates, it must create. Or its negation would then be nothing.

But in its real truth Reason is Mind—Mind which is higher than either Reason which Understands. or Understanding which reasons.

Mind is the term for Reason both in its negative and positive aspects. Mind is the great force for negation and creation continuous.

Mind is the negative, it is that which constitutes the quality alike of dialectical Reason and of Understanding.

You remember that Understanding negated simple common sense perception and to that degree was dialectical.

It negates the simple and thus posits that determinate distinction which is the work of Understanding, and just as truly it resolves this distinction, and is thus dialectical.

Now read the whole passage again:

Understanding makes determinations and maintains them; Reason is negative and dialectical because it dissolves into nothing the determinations of Understanding; Reason is positive because it is the source of the Universal in which the Particular is comprehended. Just as Understanding is commonly held to be something separate from Reason regarded generally, so dialectical Reason is held to be something separate from positive Reason. But in its real truth Reason is Mind—Mind which is higher than either Reason which understands, or Understanding which reasons. Mind is the negative, it is that which constitutes the quality alike of dialectical Reason and of Understanding; it negates the simple and thus posits that determinate distinction which is the work of Understanding, and just as truly it resolves this distinction, and is thus dialectical.

This is page 36, the fourth page of the Preface. You see how much you needed of the smaller *Logic* to get there, if you are there yet. I am pretty

positive that Hegel realized this and therefore wrote the long introduction to the briefer *Logic* which came out four years after the large one and from which I quoted so extensively.

SOME HISTORICAL OBSERVATIONS ON UNDERSTANDING

First of all a word about Kant and Understanding. Kant did not think about everything in finite categories and was therefore not wrong all the time. We are dealing with the history of thought. And in elaborating ideas about thought Kant made a tremendous discovery when he clarified the process of Understanding. Hegel, however, went further. When he discovered the final method, he could say: Correct Thinking is always dialectical and incorrect thinking is usually “Understanding”. But though we are, on the one hand, dealing with the history of thought, we are checking on the history of an object.

It must be said again that men do not reason, think, according to Reason or Understanding by caprice. Individuals do. But the question in essence is a class question. The thought of a class is of the type of Understanding because: a) it is satisfied with the old social categories, i.e. the old society, or b) though dissatisfied with them, cannot envisage the new. Temperamental individualities express their personalities in one of these categories and classes or sections of classes recognize the voice of the leader. It is very important to note that the man of Understanding is not an empiricist. But he is stuck with his fixed determinations, “abstract identity”, reformist international equals reformist international; revolutionary international equals revolutionary international. Trotsky always inveighed against this type of thinking. Yet the most devastating example of it in serious modern thought is his own thinking. He believed, he taught that the members of the reformist Third International would each join their own bourgeoisie and support the war: you see the Second International had done that and the Second International was reformist and reformist was reformist; how better exemplify what Hegel means by the abstract identity of the categories of Understanding. Trotsky believed also that the Stalinist bureaucracy would try to restore private property because only the socialist proletariat would support state property and labour bureaucracies always support private property in the end. It is an awful thing to contemplate but the large majority of politically literate workers knew better; the bourgeoisie knew better. An awful warning emerges from this. Empiricism is better than Understanding gone astray.

Consciousness

Let us add another dimension to our times. Consciousness is a word always on the tip of Hegel's pen. We are still in the Preface. Here is a rough and very elementary definition of consciousness. Consciousness is to know the concrete but to know it dialectically, to know it by the light of Reason and not of Understanding. "Consciousness is Spirit as knowing which is concrete and engrossed in externality." A curious phrase for the great Idealist. And here we run up against the dialectic in life. Kant, it is known, and Lenin gives a vigorous statement of it in Materialism and Empirio-Criticism, could not decide between idealism and materialism. Half of Kantianism was idealist, the categories of the mind; half was materialist: the objective world. He could not relate them properly and butchered both. That was Understanding. He could not bridge the gap. His determinations were too fixed. Hegel bridged the gap. He joined the two. I cannot here and now go into Mind and Spirit. Sufficient to say as Hegel says earlier (we shall come back to it) Mind is the negative, the something which continually makes everything change, seeking some higher destiny in general. But at every stage, philosophers who grasped the essence of the stage, represented the Spirit, the concrete stage in thought, of eternal Mind, which was always driving to a more and more concrete embodiment of itself in Spirit (philosophic) and in Nature (life and society). A few philosophers (here the genuine idealist in Hegel speaks) represent consciousness, but it is "concrete" and "engrossed in externality". We shall see later where the true consciousness, the true Mind lies and Hegel's reactionary conception of a few philosophers can be ignored. He goes on to say: "...but the schema of movement of this concrete knowing (like the development of all physical and intellectual life) depends entirely on the nature of the essentialities which make up the content of Logic."¹³ The "schema of movement" of dialectical thought is the schema of movement of *all* physical and *all* intellectual life.

It is a bold claim—it could not be bolder. He says that the way in which philosophers stage by stage worked out philosophy gives a scheme, which is the way all physical and intellectual things develop. This is the problem. The only proof I know is to try it. Hegel talks about world-spirit, etc. For our purposes it does not matter a damn.

Whether you say with Marx that schema reflects the material basis or with Hegel that the material basis reflects the schema which is only Mind working itself out, the point is the connection between the two. Hegel, we remember, said most emphatically and will say it again that as the object moves, and it must move, spirit, philosophical knowing, moves too. The categories move and at a certain stage they have to change into new categories. Logic is the analysis of this movement of philosophical cognition, but movement of the different stages of philosophical, i.e. correct cognition, gives us the movement of the object. Which comes first, who gets the credit, is not important for us now. And one can learn plenty from Hegel about the Method and ignore his eternal mind. The study of philosophy is the study of the method of correct thinking. You

must know categorization in general, movement in general, changes in categories in general, and then you can examine an object, e.g. the labour movement, or French drama, and work out its categories, its form of movement, its method of change, etc., conscious always of the general laws as exemplified in the particular concrete. Thus there is a Universal logic of say drama, which is expressed in Greek, Elizabethan, classical or Shavian drama, i.e. in a particular form or classification; a concrete, an individual example of it at a particular time is Aeschylus, or Racine or Shaw. Alas! Aristotle studied Sophocles & Co. and laid down certain categories which he drew from them. These he called the “Unities”. And, oh! the rivers of sweat and the conflicts of centuries in which men said that drama was to be fitted into those. A clear case of Understanding. Clear? Not clear to a good dialectician. What objective impulses in society maintained them as valid? And there a serious philosophical cognition can begin.

Has anyone asked himself yet? What objective basis, from what came the impulses which maintained Trotsky in these outmoded categories, nourished them in his mind? If you haven’t, the Preface to the Second Edition of the larger *Logic* is necessary for you.

Preface to The Second Edition

Again here, on the first page of the Preface, Hegel makes it clear; he is presenting “Thought in its philosophical aspect—that is, in its own immanent activity”, i.e. the activity inherent in it, which sounds mystical enough, but he soon says, “or, which comes to the same thing, in its necessary development.”

And so. Philosophy of thought, i.e. Logic, is to see thought as expressing what is immanent in it, which means to say how it develops. Hegel enjoys himself proving that what is immanent comes from the World-Spirit. He needed a basis and he couldn’t find socialism so he took World-Spirit. The proof of the pudding is in the eating.

He seems to separate himself from marxism by saying that what distinguishes man from beasts is the “faculty of thought”. Marx says that what separates man from beast is that man labours. But Marx would say that his thought is the result, consequence, of his labour. This distinction is sharp. But Hegel goes on to say what we can accept. He says (let us ignore where it comes from) that man transforms his thought into language and “what man transforms to language contains—conceded or mixed up with other things, or worked out to clearness—a Category; so natural to man is Logic”, and to make a big jump:

These categories function only instinctively and as impulses—they are at first

introduced into consciousness piecemeal, and therefore are mutable and mutually confusing, and thus yield to mind only a piecemeal and insecure actuality. To purify these categories and to raise the mind through them to Freedom and Truth, this it is which is the loftier task of Logic.¹⁴

Here again is the empirical, material basis of all Logic. He says the categories express the world spirit. We say they express man's material practice. But he says what we can say. That piecemeal, by instinct, impulse, changing, etc., they come into the mind and we must organize them, once we recognize that they express some order. But it is puzzling. How can the schema of development of the thoughts of philosophers represent *all* physical and intellectual life!

Let us watch Hegel at work. He notes familiar categories as Whole and Parts, a Thing and its Properties, etc. And then, in his Preface, mind you, he says quite clearly that "the reality which appertains to natural objects" is such that while we have to establish natural Categories, they sometimes clash with others whose validity we have to admit; and all this "does not permit here (i.e. in this field) that passage from opposites to abstracts and universals, which more easily takes place in the case of ideational objects." In other words, he disclaims that you can work out laws of dialectic in the case of natural objects, i.e. nature, as you can in ideas and, I would add, social objects. All the yelling about dialectic and nature! Each object has its own particular dialectic, which is a part of the general dialectic. The dialectical movement of an inanimate natural object is law, that's all. And yet an object as simple as a house has dialectical movements of its own. It is architecture, i.e. it has a certain type of structure, in which there is a conflict between use and beauty (except for the functional maniacs); it will represent the ideas of our type of family, i.e. one social system, clashing with other ideas; even its very existence as a house is sharply contradictory. It exemplifies the conflict between man and nature. The house must be painted, strengthened, repaired, etc. or nature will recapture it, i.e. destroy it. To each his own. The dialectic, i.e. philosophical cognition, correct thinking, about society, a social order, is not the same as the dialectic of a house, and that is not the same as the dialectic of a mountain.

Furthermore we remember Hegel, in the smaller *Logic*, and he will show in the larger *Logic* later, was very insistent that the dialectic included in itself all grades of thinking. There are; grades of inanimate objects and grades of everyday activity whose nature requires analytical thinking. To expect to examine it and find the categories and movement in a social system or a political party, that is monstrously absurd. Why does Hegel put it in his preface? The same bunch of chatterers existed then as exist today I suppose. At any rate, let us clear that out of our way.

In fact, the second preface, the more I look at it, the more I can see why

Hegel puts all these things down in it. He was answering arguments which had been raised, and they are things for amateurs like us to bear in mind.

Hegel is going to make a tremendous organization and analysis of thoughts, categories, etc. But he takes time out to say, and we will forget this at our peril, that categories, the forms of logic, are in Desire, Will, etc., human feelings and actions. We abstract them to think about them. But they come from there. He says again that categories are used in everyday life—Battle, War, Nation, are categories, for they sum up, generalize, an endless multitude of particular things, actions, etc. They help us to determine objective relations. Such categories have been called Natural Logic. This warns us that the whole magnificent structure is rooted in the concrete. We are going to think about it and analyse it and speculate, but every serious movement has come from below. Consciousness, logic as the science of thought, thought itself therefore is the link between us and things. But we had better here get hold of something else which this emphasis on the concrete means. Trotsky spent years, and we with him, pointing out how the workers were mistaken and deceived by stalinism. Some of us still say that. Hegelianism is merciless on the talk of such deception. This support for stalinism by the workers is an objective fact, one of the most potent objective facts. To say that the workers are fooled is to condemn the workers to being playthings of chance. No. The phenomenon of stalinism requires that you take it as an impulse from below and incorporate it into your categories and drive them forward. This emphasis on the concrete is the most difficult thing to grasp about the dialectic. I'll tell you why at once, in simple terms, which will become more and more complex. It involves the mental apparatus (and this is Kant's immortal contribution) with which you look at things. Here is a crude example. Having been trained to see reptiles as a crawling snake or lizard you cannot possibly look at a bird and recognize that its structure is so to speak reptilian. You have to strip the bird of its feathers, open it, examine it, and then *this is the thing*, organize in your mind a new conception of reptilian structure which includes birds. Until this is done, you will continue to exclude birds. They, you will say, are different. You reject them. It is an elementary static example. What Hegel is saying is this, stalinism is concrete truth, you watch it, accept it, respect it. That is the *truth*. But we are not empiricists. So our ideas, our speculative reason, our mental spectacles, our theory must be strenuously and systematically expanded so as to include stalinism as a necessary, an inevitable, form of development of the labour movement. The workers are not mistaken. They are not deceived. Not in any serious sense of these words. They are making an experience that is necessary to their own development. Stop saying that they are deceived. You are deceived. Set down and reorganize your categories to fit this phenomenon. Let go that tight grip of your old categories which puts you in the position where all you do is to shout at stalinism and predict it will do things which it does not do.

I reread this passage. I know where I am going. The question is: do you know? As a matter of fact I am attempting the impossible. In the exposition of any scientific development only the whole is the proof. At any rate, scientific thought moves on, offers scope for speculation, only on impulses from outside, from the object. What exists is the motive force. He has made a very controversial statement that whatever is real, it is reasonable. I think I am going to use it here. I am going to say that stalinism is a terrible reality and because it is real it is reasonable. I say this with even more confidence that without the reality of stalinism, you cannot reason about it at all. Good enough for the time being, let us stay there. At any rate this much is certain, as we wind our way deeper into Hegel's strenuous theorizing, no one will forget the solid material bases that the maestro gave to all moves forward in this mass of theorizing.

But having established the basis in reality of Logic, Hegel then goes on, still prefacing to show the function of mind: "When the content of that which stirs the mind is drawn out of its immediate unity with the Subject, and made an Object for it, then there begins freedom for the mind."¹⁵ That is it.

The object stirs the mind. Then you take what is subjective and you make that stir, that disturbance, an object. I, James, am the Subject, and something which is stirring within my mind is in immediate unity with me. I remove it from this unity. I so to speak take it out of mind and put it on the table before me and examine it, watch how it is moving, changing, and so this that was merely a subjective impulse now becomes objective for me. I made it so. The conclusion of the passage is crucial.

... for the mind while caught up in the workings of instinctive mental activity is broken up within the meshes of its categories into an infinitely various material. *In this web [I emphasize] strong knots are formed now and then which are foci of arrest and direction in mental life and consciousness.*

We, our consciousness, use categories. But things happen that stir our minds and what with our old categories and the multiplicity of events there is a variety, a great confusion. But out of all this there take place certain knots, crystallizations, coagulations, separating themselves and standing out of the multiplicity. They make us stop, think and show us the way out. But Hegel shows here that even the formation of the knots is an automatic objective process. When they are formed, they arrest you, make you stop, and give you direction how to speculate. This is carrying the influence of the objective or reality to an extreme.

Now here comes a sharp turn. Hegel says of these knots, these foci, that

"they owe their firmness and strength to the fact that, brought before consciousness, they are found to be independent concepts of the latter's essentiality." The mind now takes *its* turn. Consciousness looks at these knots, these signposts, that have so to speak taken shape out of the variety, and shows them to be concepts that have an independent life of their own and belong essentially to consciousness, to its own life, are a developing part of the old stock of categories which it has and still uses. Consciousness now sees that these which came by accident so to speak from outside really belong to it. (Hegel has a complicated process by which the World-Spirit embodied these in Nature and Society whence they are reflected into Spirit, which is the concrete stage of Mind in general. To hell with it.) The reason for this recognition by consciousness is clear enough. It is perfectly simple to see that precisely because the earlier categories in consciousness came from Nature and Society, pushing themselves into the minds of men in the same way, it is not surprising that with changes in nature and society the important new categories seem to consciousness to belong to its essentiality. Consciousness therefore having recognized them gets to work on a little speculation, a little mysticism, projecting things into the future. Then comes a striking passage which will link the objectivity and the subjective.

The most important for the nature of mind is not merely the relation of that which is in itself, but furthermore of that as which it knows itself, to that which it is in actuality; this self-knowledge is the fundamental determination of mind's actuality.¹⁶

Don't be afraid of it. There are two relations. 1) is the relation between mind as it is in itself and it is in actuality. 2) is the relation between mind as it knows itself and what it is in actuality. Of these two determinations Hegel says that the second is more important for the determination of mind's actuality.

Remember we have just spent a lot of time with Hegel learning how object pushes itself into the mind and how the mind takes over. He gave a tremendous place to the objective. But Hegel says it is not enough for us to know what mind is in itself, that it has the categories that Kant organized. The relation of that to actuality is not what we want. The mind must be in action on its own account. It must say yesterday my categories were A, B, C. Today they are A1, B2, C3. That is a new stage on the road to my ultimate aim. Later we shall see how this movement takes place. The thing to do is to know the role of mind. So that the actuality can only be determined when the mind has acted on the stimuli provided by the object and sets to work to see what the object is. So the truth is the concrete. But the concrete sets mind going. Mind works at the problems that the concrete has posed before it, reorganizes its whole apparatus, and then when it looks with this new apparatus it sees the concrete truth at

last.

But Hegel having grandly given both objectivity* and mind their full value now sums up:

There is a question here whether the actuality is actuality of the mind: or of the object. It does not alter the process at all.

These categories function only instinctively and as impulses—they are at first introduced into consciousness piecemeal, and therefore are mutable and mutually confusing, and thus yield to mind only a piecemeal and insecure actuality. To purify these categories and to raise the mind through them to Freedom and Truth, this it is which is the loftier task of Logic.

So that the whole passage should now be read.

Instinctive action is distinguished from intelligent and free action broadly by this, that the latter is accompanied by clear consciousness; when the content of that which stirs the mind is drawn out of its immediate unity with the Subject, and made an Object for it, then there begins Freedom for the mind, which while caught in the workings of instinctive mental activity is broken up within the meshes of its Categories into an infinitely various material. In this web strong knots are formed now and then, which are foci of arrest and direction in mental life and consciousness: they owe their firmness and strength to the fact that, brought before consciousness, they are found to be independent concepts of the latter's essentiality. The most important point for the nature of mind is not merely the relation of that which it is *in itself*, but furthermore of that as which it *knows itself*, to that which it is in actuality; this self-knowledge, because it is essentially consciousness, is the fundamental determination of mind's actuality. These Categories function only instinctively and as impulses—they are at first introduced into consciousness piecemeal, and therefore are mutable and mutually confusing, and thus yield to mind only a piecemeal and insecure actuality. To purify these Categories and to raise the mind through them to Freedom and Truth, this it is which is the loftier task of Logic.

So much for the prefaces. Getting ready to plunge into the Doctrine of Being? You are a long, long way from that—a long way. The thing is too important for any rapid grasp. You think you understand but you go on thinking as before. First of all an observation.

Dialectical Thought in Practical Life

We must not forget that when Cromwell, for example, thought in the seventeenth century, he thought dialectically. Hegel knows that very well. In the smaller *Logic*, he says:

However reluctant Understanding may be to admit the action of Dialectic, we must not suppose that the recognition of its existence is peculiarly confined to the philosopher. It would be truer to say that Dialectic gives expression to a law which is felt in all other grades of consciousness and in general experience.¹⁷

Men thought correctly and can think correctly without knowing dialectic, but if you wish to have some understanding of the science of thought, which is what we are dealing with, then you have to understand dialectic.

For the moment we leave practical instinctive dialectic and come to theoretical dialectic, marxism today. Marxism today, the whole picture changes. An unreasoning obstinacy seems to take hold of them. They grasp their categories. They will not leave them. They will not let them go. They will die for them. Not only Mensheviks, but *all*, every member of the old Bolshevik Central Committee stuck to the categories of the bourgeois revolution. And miracle of miracles, the Petrograd workers in the party had thrown it over. No, we are not going to run away from this. Not when we see Trotsky say "A workers' state equals nationalized property", and park there for good. Twenty million workers in concentration camps. He does not budge. Budge? No, sir. He will prefer to say that if within a reasonable time after the war the bureaucracy remains, then all of marxism is wrong. Let the whole work of a hundred years perish rather than change my categories. I shall not say: perhaps my concept of the workers' state is wrong. No. Never. Hegel knew very well what he was doing when with an inexhaustible energy and diversity he went over and over again and round and round this point, always adding a new light.

No one among us needs telling that before 1917 the Mensheviks were men of Understanding to the highest degree. They had a group of categories, bourgeois society, proletariat, bourgeois revolution. They had them from Marx. They were not empiricists, they were not Aristotelians. They applied those categories to Russia and could not move. Naturally that was not all. I have dealt with that, and we shall again. Now I say that the same relation between Menshevism and Bolshevism, Understanding and Dialectic, which existed before 1917 today exists between official Trotskyism and the ideas we are putting forward. There we must begin. *Trotskyism, as far as thought is concerned, is the use of the categories, etc., of Lenin's practice, 1903-23, preserved in their essential purity, and transferred to a period for which they became day by day more unsuited. Between 1933 and 1936 they became absolutely unsuited.*

The new categories, the impulses, the instinctive actions, the strong knots formed, were observed, talked about, but always incorporated into the old shell; state capitalism or reformist international that would destroy private property and refuse to support the bourgeoisie in imperialist war, an anti-proletarian bureaucracy that thrived on state property and would defend it to the last against private property, all the knots, impulses, etc. which drove these into the mind, were allowed in only in so far as they fitted into the formed and finished categories which Lenin left. That is why what were the results of Reason in one generation become Understanding in another, and the negating, the transcending of the determinations into a higher unity cannot be done.

What is the basis for this? We can answer this question by a brutal, uninhibited examination of the origin and development of trotskyism. It began on the basis of a dispute about the permanent revolution and the possibility of building socialism in one country. That is our ideological foundation. The whole debate on that issue was ruinous. Stalin, in choosing that, chose the surest way to derail the opposition. From that day to 1940, Trotsky was always defending *himself and his record against attacks*: (1) showing how close he was to leninism in the past, (2) showing how the stalinists were not leninists. (Years and years ago I used to be worried by this. What is the sense of it? I used to ask myself.) Stalinism, however, profited immensely by this. Russian stalinism did not “think” in any serious sense of the word. It began seriously to handle general theoretical ideas of its own in 1933-36, when it became fully conscious of itself and its determination to rule the state-owned economy as a class. Previous to that it acted empirically, grabbed on to the power, held it at all costs, manipulated the power to divide and crush its enemies. But it took care to drape all this in leninist garments, representing them as the basic, eternal, fixed once and for all categories. Trotsky’s position was that Stalin was a usurper distorting the categories. Thus the debate, beginning with socialism in a single country, remained forever and ever within the categories of leninism. Stalin said: whatever I do is leninism. Trotsky said no: it is not leninism. I am the genuine leninist. That was the setting. Stalin was not very serious about it. His actions were pure empiricism. Trotsky was serious about this leninism and was caught in it and strangled in it. He was entirely wrong in every theoretical and practical conclusion that was drawn from the debate.

(1) The debate was that socialism could not be built in a single country. Does anyone believe that Stalin or any of his people believe that what is in Russia is socialism? Only an utter fool can think so. What the debate was about was whether the state-property system would be maintained without a revolution sooner or later in the West. Trotsky was certain it would collapse. He was always predicting its collapse: if the party was destroyed it would collapse; the kulaks would overthrow it; war would overthrow it; the bureaucracy itself would overthrow it. That was the debate. *Both sides were much closer than appears on the surface*. And Stalin said that he could maintain it and defend it

and who said he wanted to overthrow or could not defend it was a traitor and an enemy. Shachtman told me once that he knew many serious stalinists who hated stalinism but they said they could never take Trotsky seriously because Trotsky was always predicting that Stalin would lose the state property or restore private property and it never happened. In Russia the leading trotskyites capitulated one after the other.

(2) Trotsky predicted that the theory of socialism in a single country would lead to the converting of the communist parties into national parties. His theory of 1936 was clearly stated years ago, for one thing in the criticism of the draft programme. Stalin thought otherwise and Stalin has again proved *right*. Trotsky was constantly saying that Browder, Thorez & Co. would act in one way and they proved him fundamentally wrong every time. Thus on the question of the emergence of new categories, new reflections in the mind of reality, and policies to correspond, stalinism is the force which has kept pace with the times (on the side of the counter-revolution, be it well understood) while trotskyism fought with outmoded weapons against a series of abstractions on the most fundamental questions of the day, the character and perspectives of the revolutionary state and of the existing revolutionary party.

These patently false conclusions (I would like to see someone up and debate me on them. Myself when young would have provoked that argument. Now I know better), the very opposite of the truth, came from his totally false premises. The whole "socialism in a single country" conception belongs to pre-1917. It was a continuation of the pre-1917 factional struggle in Russia, taking the new form of how to defend the state property in Russia, and how the Third international should defend this state property. The future of the Third International was predicted by its attitude to the defence of the Russian state property. The objective basis of Trotsky's Understanding type of thinking was there—the Russian state power, which he identified with the revolution. Lenin's state power in 1917 equals Russian revolution. A purely abstract identity, finite, fixed, limited. Stalin, empirical, doing whatever came naturally altered his categories ruthlessly, whatever leninist names he called them. He changed the policies in perfect harmony with his needs, the policy of the bureaucracy and the policy of his Third International. Trotsky lost himself in greater and greater abstractions until ultimately he did not expose, he justified the bureaucracy. It made no attempt to restore private property. The Third International defended the state property with flexibility and an unquenchable faith. If Trotsky's heroic struggles, his energy, his sacrifices ended in this fiasco, what is this but the justification of the bureaucracy against his predictions and incessant warnings.

That is the positive side. The negative side complements it. I believe that Ruth Fischer's book mentions that Zinoviev in 1921 at a conference of the Russian Communist Party made a speech denouncing Russia as state capitalist,

using some of the arguments we use, and (from her account) quoting Lenin. Bukharin, we should note, not only tackled this subject in the early years, but around 1928 wrote a series of articles on it. *This was four to five years before Hitler came into power.* But Trotsky? Not a line. Not one single line. From 1933 on at least the first consideration of a theoretician who was aware of the times should have been to establish a new economic basis. It must be stated again and again that the idea of a new revolutionary international without a fundamental, qualitative change in the economic development is a fantasy. Trotsky never did anything. He did not see that the revolutionary Second International had succumbed to monopoly capitalism and aided by American imperialism, reached its greatest strength after World War I. He equally did not see that the revolutionary Third International had succumbed to state capitalism aided by Russian imperialism. He never wrote about the economic changes, what he thought about it, if he did, he never thought of sufficient importance to set down. Yet *this* is the economic problem of the day. Astonishing, isn't it? It is not *only* a problem of thought. But we are concerned with that here. He just couldn't see it. His mind ran on other wheels. Lenin's monopoly capitalism, private property, revolutionary international against private property, reactionary international *for* private property, all the categories of 1917: these he lived in.

When the Stalinists in France in 1935 switched from Third Period to Popular Front, Trotsky, faced with the fact that here they showed their complete dependence upon Stalin, which was completely destructive of his theory, jumped into psychology. "Ultra-leftists always become opportunists in the moment of danger." I tackled him on it in 1939. He maintained his position. His psychology is for his biographer and the more advanced theoreticians of the Workers' Party. But his method of thought, that I think is clear.

Back again to the negative, or a combination now of positive and negative. What is our past, our theoretical heritage? *Imperialism and State and Revolution* were the theoretical foundations of the Third International. They were theoretical studies of a permanent character, they summed up the past, took off from there, and incorporated the new, in economic phenomena, qualitative changes, labour organizations, and the stages of creative power of the masses.

Since then we have lived through an age in which the economic changes, the changes in the labour organizations, and in the character of mass movements have been such that it makes one dizzy to keep pace with them. Look at our heritage. If I want to take up any of the problems of today (I have enumerated them enough), I have nothing to begin with. I know. (This also is a knot which has come from impulses pushed into my own mind.) If I wish to trace a development on state capitalism, Yugoslavia, Rumania, Trotsky has left us nothing. I have to read Marx and Engels and Lenin. Lenin's work on it slight as it is, is a *perfect* but absolutely *perfect* example of dialectical materialism. For

the actions of the proletariat, soviets, etc., I have to read Lenin.

Everything stops dead in 1923. For the fundamental forces that shape a labour organization I have to read Lenin on the Second International. "Tools of the Kremlin" is not an analysis. For the analysis of capital and the problems of today I have to read Lenin, Bukharin, and Rosa Luxemburg. I have discovered this by experience. Much of our past quoting of Trotsky is for tactical purposes.

Instead we have the *Permanent Revolution*, *The History of the Russian Revolution*, *Life of Stalin*, *My Life*, and innumerable abstract adjurations of policy on various revolutionary situations. The best are on Germany. But these are vitiated by two fundamental blunders, one of which I knew since I wrote *World Revolution*, and the other which I suspected a long time, in fact was quite sure of, but could not speak of. The first is that Trotsky believed that the stalinist bureaucracy wanted a revolution in Germany but did not know true leninism. Utterly false. Workers' state equals support of revolution abroad: therefore false policy due to ignorance or stupidity. The second is the complete control of the stalinist party by the apparatus. Ruth Fischer shows that in detail. I shall make no fuss about it now. *But the policy in Germany as far back as 1930 should have been governed by the idea that the workers at all costs should act over the heads of their organizations.* And we should welcome a debate with anyone who said: "No. They should have tried to urge their organizations to act." Lenin said, "I shall go to the sailors." He gave that ultimatum not to a union or a reformist party but to the Bolshevik Party. Lenin told the soviets to go to hell at one stage. "All power to the factory committees!"

In France in 1934, the *workers*, forming a United Front from below, saved France from a fascist government. We have seen it now too often. A full statement we have made elsewhere, good as a start but not good enough.

The Transitional Programme says: "the masses come out regularly but the leaders betray." It was very useful against Shachtman and to *ménager* the Socialist Workers' Party. But it is clear that this is not summation of the concrete stage of development. The sections on the Communist Party are pathetic. Yet they are revolutionary at times even, in the Conversations chiefly, and I think this is symptomatic, they are full of revolutionary fervour and insight, the revolutionary *leader of men*. But the theory is *abstract*. All the concrete problems of the day are covered over with generalizations, and where the policy has to be concrete it is not only wrong, but, in the hands of his followers, ridiculous or simply non-existent. Ridiculous because who in the name of God can carry out a defeatist policy in Dimitrov's Bulgaria or Anna Pauker's Rumania, or Gottwald's Czechoslovakia. Russian commanders and officers rule the armies. The GPU, the Secret Police, rules the bureaux. Economic and military plans are made in Moscow and carried out by Russian agents. The divisions of the satellites will be sandwiched between Russian

divisions. To talk about defencism in Russia but defeatism elsewhere is ridiculous. And if the Red Army marches on France, no one can know what the policy is. The theoretical disintegration is complete. In the United States, precisely because of the backward state of political organization the old categories have some application. Hence the Socialist Workers' Party has developed. The organizational politicalization of the proletariat will at once face the Socialist Workers' Party with the problems we have seen elsewhere. These problems will come to us. we shall not have to go to them. But here in trotskyite thought is such a wreck that we have an opportunity of making a systematic investigation of precisely, how and why categories should be changed and what happens if they do not.

Understanding

Let us move over to the Hegelian *Logic* again. But first some observations. The categories Hegel uses, Understanding, Reflection, Force, Actuality, etc., are permeated with movement. But Hegel has himself told us that you cannot expect this dialectical movement in its most advanced stages in nature. Each series of objects, sciences, have their own dialectic. Thus in the *Phenomenology of Mind* there is a long (and to use Lenin's word) headache of a passage on Force as the objective counterpart of Understanding. But here Hegel is dealing with nature. The category of Understanding as applied to Nature is one thing, as applied to a society is something else. You look into each object and find its own dialectic, at its grade of development.

But we can go further. Engels says that in the Doctrine of Essence, it is not important whether you agree with Hegel's transitions from one stage to another. It is the flexibility and penetration of thought exemplified there which is important. Hegel, it is said, did not hesitate to cheat to get a transition which he felt was instinctively right, but which he couldn't see the way to make. And he himself says about objects and developments that Nature is "weak and fails to exhibit the logical forms in their purity." Which is obvious. Furthermore he and Marx are always saying: the proof is the whole. The proof is where we get when we are done. If after a thorough, a many-sided investigation of Trotsky's ideas by means of the Logic, we see it, its origins, its processes, its results, before us in some order that makes us understand it better, then that is the proof, the demonstration. So far we have used the two Prefaces, and the Introduction. Some years later, Hegel wrote what we call the smaller *Logic*, a brief summary. The two should always be read together. The full doctrine is in *The Science of Logic*, the larger one. But the smaller is more mellow, simpler, easier to grasp-as our outline. But the smaller *Logic* has a special virtue of its own. The first 150 pages consist of the most masterly summary of what is meant by philosophy that I have ever read anywhere. For that matter it is the finest general view of any subject that you can imagine and it is worth reading

for what it reaches and as a mode of exposition. Here he takes up all the terms, modes of thought, how philosophy arises, etc. Let us see what we can get from this general exposition.

First of all the movement of philosophy itself:

For, firstly, the empirical sciences do not stop short at the mere observation of the individual features of a phenomenon. By the aid of thought, they are able to meet philosophy with materials prepared for it, in the shape of general uniformities, i.e. laws, and classifications of the phenomena. When this is done, the particular facts which they contain are ready to be received into philosophy.¹⁸

This is really lovely. Look at it and see the general Hegelian method which your humble servant has worked out. First we see that the objective events pushed themselves into the mind. That is true, in general abstractly. But now we become more concrete. Science observes stones, gases, stars, etc. Then it makes, laws. Then these laws go into philosophy.

You know that? You are ready to go on? You will never learn to be a dialectician. Stop and look at it. I am positive that you do not see. Science observing phenomena is analytical cognition. Science negating these and making laws is synthetic cognition. Philosophy incorporating these laws is Dialectic, the absolute Idea, philosophic cognition. All three are necessary. Watch this. These are not my jokes. At the *end* of the *Logic*, Hegel is going to start moving through these so rapidly that if you do not know about them you will be lost. Let us continue:

This, secondly, implies a certain compulsion on thought itself to proceed to these concrete specific truths.

Watch it. Watch it. We have had this before. But watch it.

The reception into philosophy of these scientific materials now that thought has removed their immediacy and made them cease to be mere data forms at the same time a development of thought out of itself.

Do you see the important words? They are the last three: “out of itself”. Thought gets the stuff from outside, but then thought itself must show that

what it gets is a logical development out of itself. We have discussed this before. "Philosophy then owes its development to the empirical sciences."

Back to the objective:

In return it gives their contents what is so vital to them, the freedom of thought—gives them, in short, an *a priori* character.

Back again to the subjective thought. This lovely movement.

These contents are now warranted necessary, and no longer depend on the evidence of facts merely, that they were so found and so experienced.

Thought shows that from thought we can see that the new objects, the new developments, were necessary. That is the meaning of freedom. Freedom is the recognition of necessity.

Both objective and subjective are together. And they are still together.

The fact as experienced thus becomes an illustration and a copy of the original and completely self-supporting activity of thought.

If I say stalinism is Menshevism in a new stage, fear of the revolution, based on a new type of labour bureaucracy, holding on to one imperialism, Russia, as Menshevism held on and holds on to the Anglo-American imperialism, if I say that Menshevism reflected the bourgeois democratic character of state capitalism, then although the objective movement of society gave me stalinism, I have incorporated it into my previous thought, I have made it a necessity, and I am free. I understand it, I know how to fight it, I am not overwhelmed by it.

But if I say "tools of the Kremlin" then what the hell necessity is that?

Again Hegel (I hope you get what I get from these extracts—almost a sensuous pleasure. Nowhere else does Hegel write so well—among the things I know, that is): "The thought, which is genuine and self-supporting, must be intrinsically concrete..." Quite so. Stalinism is concrete enough. "It must be an Idea." Good. We make of it part of the whole great Idea, the concept of the development of the proletariat in capitalist society; more, plenty more of this later. "... and when it is viewed in the whole of its universality, it is the Idea,

or the Absolute.”¹⁹

Yes sir. Stalinism is the Idea, where it has reached today. You doubt that? Then listen. Menshevism, the reformist Second International defended private property. Stalinism does not, except for its own main purpose, to help its patron Russia; Menshevism made a fetish of parliamentarianism, stalinism does not; Menshevism worshipped national defence, stalinism does not; Menshevism acted nationally, stalinism does not. It acts across national boundaries. The workers following stalinism therefore have repudiated vast areas of bourgeois ideology, they have left it behind. The stalinists use this high stage of advancement in the service of imperialism. But it is a high stage. It is the present concrete stage of the proletariat on the way to socialism. It is where the Absolute has reached its concrete form. The bureaucratic character of stalinism is not the Absolute. But that is not socialism. The workers have to overthrow that. But they are not where they were in 1914.

As we told that neo-Shachtmanite, Germain,* when he says that the workers were politically and organizationally worse off than in 1914, he completely misunderstands marxism. How can he formulate policy when he makes these blunders? But no. He wants them to be as in 1914. Those are his categories. We touched on this in *The Invading Socialist Society* (1947). But we could not elaborate it. The truth is we did not see it so clearly.

The former pen-name of Ernest Mandel.

Thought must demonstrate necessity. If it does not you get panic and disintegration. Subjective. But Hegel does not ask thought to demonstrate necessity in order to maintain morale. Hell no. There is something much bigger at stake. That objective which pushes itself into the mind, to see it properly, you need the spectacles, the amended spectacles of thought as necessity. That is the importance of correct thought; to be able to see reality. Reality says, “Thought. Here are some new bits of me. They make a whole but I don’t know what I am and you don’t know. But take these scraps that I give you, organize your lenses, and you can tell me what I am, for without you I shall never know.”

See now Hegel getting at it again:

To ask if a category is true or not, must sound strange to the ordinary mind: for a category apparently becomes true only when it is applied to a given object, and apart from this application it would seem meaningless to inquire into its truth.²⁰

Then comes a sentence and whenever you hear him say something like this stop and meditate for three months. This is the sentence:

But this is the very question on which everything turns.

The category must agree with the object? It is far truer to say that the object must make the category agree with it. Listen:

We must however in the first place understand clearly what we mean by Truth. In common life truth means the agreement of an object with our conception of it. We thus pre-suppose an object to which our conception must conform. In the philosophical sense of the word, on the other hand, truth may be described, in general abstract terms, as the agreement of a thought content with itself.

He adds: "This meaning is quite different from the one given above." It is.

The everyday conception of truth is what Hegel calls correct representation. I have an idea in my head of what the CIO is. I examine the CIO. I find it has so many members, they have such and such leaders, such and such is their policy. The idea that I had was more or less correct. That is correct representation. An analytical cognition obviously.

But you and I are dialecticians. We know that stalinism today is the true state of the labour movement. It is revolutionary, repudiating parliamentarianism, private property, national defence, and national boundaries. It is however attached to an imperialism as patron and is bureaucratic and aims at totalitarian control of labour and then of capital. Now to the extent that the CIO corresponds to this, we have truth, and to the extent that the CIO does not correspond to this we have untruth. And a philosophical cognition consists of an exact analysis of how and why the CIO departs from this truth. Is it attached to one imperialism as patron, etc.? Does it aim at bureaucratic totalitarian control of workers, etc.?

All other truth is, for Hegel, good enough for commonsense everyday life. But not for serious cognition. Thus in everyday truth the object simply fits into any ideas you have of it, in philosophical truth the object fits or does not fit "into the Idea, the Absolute, the concrete stage at which it has reached".

As usual with Hegel there is a double sense. The Absolute Idea has another truth, the inner truth of the idea itself, a truly democratic non-bourgeois revolutionary socialist international. But that does not exist, though it also is a

part of the complete notion, the complete truth.

Now take the complete extract, a good long one, and note in passing how Hegel loves to show that language in everyday life often has a deep philosophical import:

It will now be understood that Logic is the all-animating spirit of all the sciences, and its categories the spiritual hierarchy. They are the heart and centre of things: and yet at the same time they are always on our lips, and, apparently at least, perfectly familiar objects. But things thus familiar are usually the greatest strangers. Being, for example, is a category of pure thought: but to make "Is" an object of investigation never occurs to us. Common fancy puts the Absolute far away in a world beyond. The Absolute is rather directly before us, so present that so long as we think, we must, though without express consciousness of it, always carry it with us and always use it. Language is the main depository of these types of thought; and one use of the grammatical instruction which children receive is unconsciously to turn their attention to distinctions of thought.²¹

Watch that question of the Absolute which is always with us. Reflect on it for a moment. Everyone has some conception of an Absolute at all times, a vague criterion. He makes a "correct representation" of the CIO and he stays there, but at the back of his mind he has an Absolute, a conception of what a labour movement ought to be today. Hegel may be absolutely fantastic, that labour should not go too far, etc., but it is an absolute, his absolute, though it may be absolutely nonsense.

Again. Let us go on:

Logic is usually said to be concerned with forms only and to derive the material for them from elsewhere. But this "only", which assumes that the logical thoughts are nothing in comparison with the rest of the contents, is not the word to use about forms which are the absolutely real ground of everything. Everything else rather is an "only" compared with these thoughts. To make such abstract forms a problem presupposes in the inquirer a higher level of culture than ordinary; and to study them in themselves and for their own sake signifies in addition that these thought-types must be deduced out of thought itself, and their truth or reality examined by the light of their own laws. We do not assume them as data from without, and then define them or exhibit their value and authority by comparing them with the shape they take in our minds. If we thus acted, we should proceed from observation and experience, and should, for instance, say we habitually employ the term "force" in such a case, and such a meaning. A definition like that would be called correct, if it agreed with the conception of its object present in our

ordinary state of mind. The defect of this empirical method is that a notion is not defined as it is in and for itself, but in terms of something assumed, which is then used as a criterion and standard of correctness. No such test need be applied: we have merely to let the thought-forms follow the impulse of their own organic life.²²

I cannot refrain from pointing out. The organic life of the thought-forms, the categories, is that they develop from their own contradictions. Stalinism must come out of leninism, as leninism came out of the Second International; and the revolutionary Fourth International will come out of stalinism so to speak, out of its contradictions. If not, your thought is no good.

To ask if a category is true or not, must sound strange to the ordinary mind: for a category apparently becomes true only when it is applied to a given object, and apart from this application it would seem meaningless to inquire into its truth. But this is the very question on which everything turns. We must however in the first place understand clearly what we mean by Truth. In common life truth means the agreement of an object with our conception of it. We thus pre-suppose an object to which our conception must conform. In the philosophical sense of the word, on the other hand, truth may be described, in general abstract terms, as the agreement of a thought-content with itself. This meaning is quite different from the one given above. At the same time the deeper and philosophical meaning of truth can be partially traced even in the ordinary usage of language. Thus we speak of a true friend; by which we mean a friend whose manner of conduct accords with the notion of friendship. In the same way we speak of a true work of Art. Untrue in this sense means the same as bad, or self-discordant. In this sense a bad state is an untrue state and, evil and untruth may be said to consist in the contradiction subsisting between the function or notion and the existence of the object. Of these correctnesses, which are at the same time untruths, we may have many in our heads. God alone is the thorough harmony of notion and reality. All finite things involve an untruth: they have a notion and an existence, but their existence does not meet the requirements of the notion. For this reason they must perish, and then the incompatibility between their notion and their existence becomes manifest. It is in the kind that the individual animal has its notion: and the kind liberates itself from this individuality by death.²³

A good passage. Enjoy them. For when we come to the actual *Logic*, and take up the larger one, God help us if we are not well prepared. Again:

The study of truth, or, as it is here explained to mean, consistency, constitutes the proper problem of logic. In our everyday mind we are never troubled with questions about the truth of the forms of thought. We may also express the

problem of logic by saying that it examines the forms of thought touching their capability to hold truth. And the question comes to this: What are the forms of the infinite, and what are the forms of the finite? Usually no suspicion attaches to the finite forms of thought; they are allowed to pass unquestioned. But it is from conforming to finite categories in thought and action that all deception originates.

Correct categories. Correct categories. Categories that move and do not stay put.

Now let us go on. He now takes up the different methods of obtained truth. We know them. Listen to him *again*:

Truth may be ascertained by several methods, each of which however is no more than a form. Experience is the first of these methods. But the method is only a form: it has no intrinsic value of its own. For in experience everything depends upon the mind we bring to bear upon actuality. A great mind is great in its experience; and in the motley play of phenomena at once perceives the point of real significance. The idea is present, in actual shape, not something, as it were, over the hill and far away. The genius of a Goethe, for example, looking into nature or history, has great experiences, catches sight of the living principle, and gives expression to it. A second method of apprehending the truth is Reflection, which defines it by intellectual relations of condition and conditioned. But in these two modes the absolute truth has not yet found its appropriate form. The most perfect method of knowledge proceeds in the pure form of thought: and here the attitude of man is one of entire freedom.²⁴

Reflection is merely another name for Understanding.

And on the final pages of this sketch of what philosophy is about, before he takes up actual philosophical schools, he warns us finally:

If the thought-forms are vitiated by a fixed antithesis, i.e. if they are only of a finite character, they are unsuitable for the self-centred universe of truth, and truth can find no adequate receptacle in thought. Such thought, which can produce only limited and partial categories and proceed by their means, is what in the stricter sense of the word is termed Understanding. The finitude, further, of these categories lies in two points. Firstly, they are only subjective, and the antithesis of an objective permanently clings to them.²⁵

This is priceless. There is always truth, the revolutionary truth, and some objective workers who are permanently unable to understand this truth until of

course one day they break out.

Secondly they are always of restricted content, and so persist in antithesis to one another and still more to the Absolute.

You see stalinism and leninism remain permanently opposed to each other. These dopes do not see that repudiation of parliamentarianism, national defence, private property, and national isolation, which distinguish the stalinist parties today, is precisely what leninism was in its day. It has not been lost, but it has been corrupted, turned into its opposite. But our men of no understanding, i.e. our men of Understanding, have leninism and stalinism in a fixed antithesis and that is why they have to start all over again with immediate demands.

Dialectic

You understand so far? Ho! Ho! You do, and yet you don't. (Perfect dialectic, by the way.) All the time you are reading about finite categories, fixed, limited. Good. But in true dialectical fashion, we establish a category only to break it up. That is the point. You no sooner have it fixed than you must at once crack it wide open. In fact the chief point about a finite category is that it is not finite. You can make it so, you can torture reality to keep it finite, but we must now see how it is not only thought that moves the categories, creates the truth of the Idea, but that it is natural to man to do so. Get ready for the Preface to *The Phenomenology of Mind*.

The Natural Moments of Thought

Now that we have some general ideas, and some concrete material worked into them, we can dig a little deeper into consciousness. Always a general statement, then a little more concrete, and so on. I hope that we will see the essence of the matter once and for all. Only after this is well done shall we be able to go into the *details* of the *Logic* and emerge (1) with a vision of our own ideas as opposed to others, such as we have not had before, (2) with a method which will enable us to clarify and develop these ideas as we could not do in the past, (3) with a method that will enable us to tackle other fields of thought in a systematic manner, hitherto impossible for most of us. We are going to lay a thorough basis of the general. It is going to be thorough, my friends, very thorough.

Before he wrote the two *Logics*, Hegel wrote *The Phenomenology of Mind*, a

study of the development of consciousness through its various states. *The Phenomenology of Mind* he introduced with a Preface and an Introduction. As usual he states the principles of what he is going to do in the book, what in fact he will do with all his life.

Only two or three terms are needed to understand him. We know by now that the Absolute Idea is the complete notion (stand and salute at that word!) of a thing in its totality, origin, movement, realization of all potentialities, etc. The subject is the active agent, the doer, the mover; in thought, the thinker in the world at large and the incessant negativist.

Thought is the subject constantly negating. The substance of a thing is—its substance. Hegel loved to take ordinary expressions and show the deep philosophical content hidden in them. We can do the same. *Later*, we shall perhaps go into the logical significance of substance. That is not necessary now. Same with actuality. Actuality is the concrete living stage of a thing. The actuality of the labour movement in Europe is concrete stalinism. But we as philosophers know that you cannot understand stalinism unless you know that actuality expresses an Idea. In other words, naturally everything depends on the eye or rather the consciousness that looks on actuality. We have done all that, in general.

Hegel begins by saying that the world of that day, the epoch, is a birth time, the old world is tottering to its fall. We see “frivolity” and “ennui”, also the “undefined foreboding of something unknown”. We of 1948 know all of these today. It was, in 1807, after the French revolution had failed to bring the millenium and men were asking: what? The new world, says Hegel, was making its first appearance in general outline. But precisely because of this fact consciousness fails to get the detailed expanse of content. At the first appearance of the new, only the essential (the broad) principles and outlines can be grasped, and that only by a few individuals. The content is not elaborated in detail, and for this reason its existence, the existence of the general content, is turned into something *particular*, not universal. Note how the things we emphasize, alienation, creativity, etc., are looked upon by other people not as the basis but as mere features, particulars. Hegel says that only what is perfectly determinate in form, concrete, external, is comprehensible by everybody. We should take these lessons to heart. I have hammered away at them in my notes. Thinking according to ordinary intelligence requires that it deals with *familiar* things. And when you deal with the future of a world, it is difficult for ordinary thought. We can't change that.

Now, says Hegel, one side parades the wealth of its material and the intelligibility of its Ideas. (A note says that he is referring to Schelling and his school. It does not matter. I am referring to Trotsky and his school. There can be other references, in other contexts. Kant and Hegel are the criteria of all

modern thought, as we use the French revolution or the Russian as our criteria, fundamental references for all succeeding and even past revolutions.) One side parades the wealth of its material and the intelligibility of its ideas, the other can only parade the “intuitive rationality” and “divine quality” of its content. (You feel no doubt the application to ourselves.) We cannot be too concrete about the future. The material isn’t there yet. Yet the other side, the group of Schelling, is silenced, and not only by the power of those who can only lean so to speak on the divine. They feel weariness and indifference; the demands for greater development are “just but unfulfilled”. As Stalin says, “clear, I should think.” The other side, Hegel’s opponents, of course, “They haul on to their territory a lot of material, that, namely, which is already familiar and arranged in order; and since they are concerned more especially about what is exceptional, strange and curious, they seem all the more to be in possession of the rest … as well as to have control over what was unregulated and disorderly.”²⁶

This is Germain to the life. In fact, if they did not have to make predictions, being (in our reference) politicians, they could make quite a show until the predictions come home to roost. Everything, says Hegel, seems to be brought by them within the compass of the Absolute Idea. But, he says, when you look more closely at what they are doing, you will see that it is “the same principle taking shape in diverse ways; it is the shapeless repetition of one and the same idea, which is applied in an external fashion to different material, the wearisome reiteration of it keeping up the semblance of diversity.”²⁷

The idea is an abstract universal. But it does not develop, it merely repeats and repeats the same formula. Then comes the hammer blow: “If the knowing subject carries around everywhere the one inert abstract form, this means the same God-damned abstract category day after day” (can you name one so persistent abstraction?), “taking up in external fashion whatever material comes his way and dipping it into this element,” i.e. fitting all the material into this permanent category, “then this comes about as near to fulfilling what is wanted, viz. a self-origination of the wealth of detail, and a self-determining distinction of shapes and forms …”

The things themselves have to originate from themselves, not by being fitted into a fixed category; the shapes and forms have to take their different contours from their own logic. This kind of business, says Hegel, *though as we said it may begin from an Absolute which is true*, by its abstractness, gives us so little real knowledge that it comes as near to fulfilling what is wanted as any chance fancies about the content in question.

Note that Schelling and Co. began right, but can end in giving as little grasp of the object as any caprice of imagination. This is a hell of a thing to say. But he is right. Trotsky simply didn’t know anything serious about the Russian

bureaucracy, though he wrote so much. He died in the belief that they would restore private property.

And how Hegel abuses this one category of thinking, calls it “monochrome formalism”, “monotonous and abstract universality” and such-like ill names. These monotonists, and this is really juicy, claim that to be dissatisfied with their wearisome category “argues an incapacity to grasp the standpoint of the Absolute, and keep a firm hold on it.” How often we have heard that the nationalized property is the Absolute, etc. etc., and many cannot hold on to it “firmly”. He then says that true scientific method will never be able to defeat these people until it grasps its own nature and method, and then he says what for him everything depends on.

In my view—a view which the developed exposition of the system can alone justify—everything depends on grasping and expressing the ultimate truth not as Substance but as Subject as well.

That is to say, scientific method cannot examine the object alone but must at the same time and equally examine the categories with which it examines the object. Did you guess it? It's too bad we know so much. *Everything depends on that.*²⁸

Are you slightly disappointed? Is that all, you say? Yes. And if you feel that way, then Part I prepared you well. Let us congratulate ourselves, but, having been rash before, decide to be modest this time.

The truth is what you examine and what you examine it with; both are in process of constant change. What marxists considered a workers' state, a revolutionary international, a reformist international, in 1871, cannot be the same in 1905, in 1923, and in 1948.

This at first sight may seem to you a simple repetition of complaints against Trotsky. You should examine them a little more closely. Every time I repeat it, it is in a new context. This time I want to make clear what Trotsky did. He said, this is a workers' state. And then he said, all these and these are degenerations, but no more, because the category with which we began is still valid. It never struck him that it was perfectly legitimate to say, “After twenty-five years of Russia, we must now say that our previous conception of a workers' state was inadequate.” He never even tried. He didn't write about it to reject it. That never crossed his mind even as theory, though the idea of marxism being proved wrong could cross his mind, and the second, it seems to me, was a far more serious thing.

At any rate there it is, in the most crucial revolution of thought in history, the discoverer of dialectic says what he thinks everything depends on. And it seems to me to explain, as thought, the procedure by which Trotsky's theories ended in failure.

I shall not go any further into quotes from the Preface. We shall take that matter up in more detail in the *Logic* itself. But I summarize certain portions of it.

The subject is a constant negativity. It assumes a constant change. When it looks at something it sees it and sees the negative in it which will be positive tomorrow, thus constantly developing new categories, which correspond to the changing object; the object gave the first impulses to changes in *consciousness*, for without this you cannot trace the changes in the object.

Consciousness and the Object: The Introduction

Now we are not going to be less Hegelian than Hegel in method. In the Introduction Hegel goes back to the point. It is his main point, the point from which everything flows. He takes it up in detailed fashion. We must go through it in the particular form the maestro chooses. Sentence by sentence. And all the time we are becoming more familiar with the method in general, *practising* it, learning the terms, becoming familiar with the atmosphere.

Suppose we call knowledge the notion, and the essence of truth "being" of the object, then the examination consists in seeing whether the notion corresponds with the object.²⁹

That is simple enough enough in appearance. It isn't really. You remember, I hope, all we said before about this. The problem is the relation between the term "notion" and the peculiar term "truth". Let us repeat it by saying that the truth is the concrete stage that the notion, the absolute, has reached, actuality, but actuality in terms of the Idea.

But if we call the inner nature of the object, or what it is in itself, the notion, and, on the other side, understand by object the notion qua object i.e. the way the notion is for an other, then the examination consists in our seeing whether the object corresponds to its own notion.³⁰

You remember that? How we took up what stalinism was and how a truly philosophical cognition would look at it and look at the CIO. To repeat it once

more. Stalin represents where the labour movement is today, corrupted of course by capital; To see this we must have a clear notion of the labour movement. When we look at the CIO we compare it to stalinism—not in detail, but what it really represents, not Menshevism, but a perverted leninism. And we shall find that the CIO is far more leninist than it is Menshevik, though because it is corrupted by American imperialism and for various historical reasons you cannot at once see the leninist core in it.

It is clear, of course, that both of these processes are the same. The essential fact, however, to be borne in mind throughout the whole enquiry is that both these moments, notion and object, “being for another”, and “being in itself”, themselves fall within the knowledge which we are examining.³¹

The thing to remember is that both Marx's Capital and capital in 1948 are parts of the knowledge. Never forget it.

Consequently we do not require to bring standards with us, nor to apply our fancies and thoughts in the inquiry; and just by our leaving these aside we are enabled to treat and discuss the subject as it is in itself and for itself, as it is in its complete reality.³²

That needs no explanation? You flatter yourself. What does “We do not require to bring standards with us” mean? It seems to say that you should have nothing to judge by except your notion, carefully worked out, with its past, and its future flowing from its past. When the bourgeois object, society, presents bourgeois democracy with insoluble problems, then that notion, bourgeois democracy, is dead and gone for the bourgeoisie. The bourgeoisie breaks it up. You do not require new standards. You require a correct notion—and so, by this means, a new object.

But not only in this respect, that notion and object, the criterion and what is to be tested, are ready to hand in consciousness itself, is any addition of ours superfluous, but we are also spared the trouble of comparing these two and of making an examination in the strict sense of the term; so that in this respect, too, since consciousness tests and examines itself, all we are left to do is simply and solely to look on.

Hegel is a bit naive about this solely looking on, and watching the process at work. What he is saying, however, is that this is “the natural process of all

thought". And if you work at these two movements, then "you" have nothing to add.

Consciousness does not seem able to get, so to say, behind it as it is, not for consciousness, but in itself, and consequently seems also unable to test 'knowledge by it. But just because consciousness has, in general, knowledge of an object, there is already present the distinction that the inherent nature, what the object is in itself, is one thing to consciousness, while knowledge, or the being of the object for consciousness, is another moment.³³

The realistic contrast comes sharply to the fore. *At all times* consciousness has these two moments in it, what its notion of a thing is, and what the thing is in itself. Hegel did not make them up. He says everybody thinks like that. You can think in no other way. You may not know this and you may not think about it. Your notion of capital may not be Marx's notion, i.e. *Capital* plus Lenin's *Imperialism*, etc., it may be the notion of Adam Smith, or Henry Ford or Norman Thomas. It may be a bad notion or a good notion. That is precisely the point. You must *know* that this distinction exists, *and examine them*.

Upon this distinction, which is present as a fact, the examination turns.³⁴

This process, says Hegel, is present as a fact. That is why you don't have to bring standards, you have nothing to do so far as the basic moments are concerned. They are always there, your knowledge of your wife as she is (or of husband: no offence intended) is always governed by the fact of what you think a wife is, Hegel or no Hegel. Every man has a notion of what a wife is. By this he judges his own wife.

But this being established, Hegel then says: the whole thing turns upon the relation between these two, and the way they develop.

Should both, when thus compared, not correspond, consciousness seems bound to alter its knowledge, in order to make it fit the object.

That seems obvious enough. If capital in 1948 does not correspond to our notion of it, what it is, its contradictions, where it came from, where it is going, if it does not correspond to the laws we have worked out, then we have to alter its knowledge to make it fit the object. Simple, but!

But in the alteration of the knowledge, the object itself also, in point of fact, is altered.

The notion, capital of 1948, is altered. You do not change your notion and then *see the same object that you saw before you altered your notion*. When you correct your notion, you change the object. You see, you experience capital in 1948 as AAaaBBbbCCcc. This does not correspond to your notion. Good. You change your notion. But, my good friend, when you change your notion, and look again, capital is no longer AAaaBBbbCCcc. It cannot be. For this AA etc. (what an ass I was to take such a long symbol) this AA etc. that you saw in the first place was seen with the eyes of the original notion:

For the knowledge which existed was essentially a knowledge of the object; with change in the knowledge, the object also becomes different, since it belonged essentially to this knowledge.³⁵

Quite so. The object AA that you saw was only AA because the notion in mind was Notion X. That was the vision with which you examined and found what you examined to be unsatisfactory; you cannot now change glasses or eyes to Notion Y and go back and find AA. For AA was the result of Notion X.

Hence consciousness comes to find that what formerly to it was the essence is not what is *per se*, or what was *per se* was only *per se for consciousness*.³⁶

Hegel seems perilously near saying that except in so far as we know an object it does not exist. But he means nothing of the kind. What he is saying is that *consciousness* discovers that what formerly it thought to be truth *per se*, in itself was not truth, in itself, was truth only for the particular vision, criterion, standards with which it looked on the world. And we who -know something about what thinking in terms of Understanding does to the vision, blinds it to the obvious, that the Communist Party *was* going to stick to Russia, we can understand the lifework of Hegel. He drives the point home:

Since, then, in the case of its object consciousness finds its knowledge not corresponding with this object, the object likewise fails to hold out.

The object fails to hold out. They think they will continue to see socialism arising from capitalism, *after they have abandoned dialectic*. They don't. They

change their notion, and the object fails to hold out. With remarkable speed, Messrs Burnham and Co. see a new object, a new capitalism.

Hegel concludes where he began, but now the original abstract statement is concretized and full of meaning:

The standard for examining is altered when that, whose criterion this standard was to be, does not hold its ground in the course of the examination; and the examination is not only an examination of knowledge but also of the criterion used in the process.³⁷

Sidney Hook has made a translation of this passage which I think is better, or at least it *reads* better.

The standards of testing change when that whose criterion the standard was supposed to be, no longer remains in the course of testing what it was. The test is not only a test of knowledge but of its standards as well.³⁸

The Fourth International tests neither knowledge nor criterion. It cannot change criterion because it absolutely refuses to test knowledge. To this day you cannot find one line which says Trotsky proved and taught the Communist Party would join the bourgeoisie, and it did not. How come? They refuse even to look at it.

To conclude rapidly this exposition of Hegel's exposition. He says that the great means of changing these two moments is *Experience*. People go through experiences and change their ideas of objects and so change their notion. They do not know that they are thereby carrying out the great Hegelian principle of *negativity*, constantly negating, changing objects and their notions to them. Thus there is a constant development of notions because there is a constant development of objects. Dialectical logic is the science of tracing by what laws, in what way, notions, our concepts of things, change, to know that they change, to know how they change, constantly to examine these changes. Scientific method is the examination of an object in its changes and the examination of our concepts of that object, watching how *both* change, doing it consciously, clearly, with knowledge and understanding. Now God help you if your concept, your notion of a workers' state in 1917, remains static, while everything else around you changes. A truly dialectical method would have: (1) brought the theory of capital into harmony with this apparent monstrosity-and made our ideas of it consistent with our past. Trotsky has left us not a single line on this, *not a line*. We have tried to do just this; (2) elaborated some

concept of what a workers' state is, more concrete than in the past.

From the Commune Marx leapt forward. Trotsky has had nothing to say on this. He half-heartedly tackled *one* idea, the idea of more than one party. The Fourth International has gone further than he here, in my opinion, chiefly to avoid the charge of totalitarianism. No serious study exists. In all other respects Trotsky remains where he was in 1918. Revive the soviets, revive the plan, etc. etc. See the Transitional Programme.

What he has done is this. He has selected one definition (and Hegel does a job on definitions—later), nationalized property. From there he proceeds to point out everything the stalinists do wrong. His definition is eternal, changeless. But nothing is that way. It not only leads him to his catastrophic misconceptions of what the stalinist bureaucracy was aiming at. It not only led him to misconceive entirely the directions and actions of the Third International. It led him ultimately, *as Hegel says it is bound to do*, to do the very opposite of his intention—to throw doubt, or to raise the question of, the validity of marxism itself. True he put it off some distance. But as I see it now, this is what is eating at the European comrades. *Whether* Trotsky had written it or not, trotskyist thinking, persisted in, led the posing of the question of the disintegration of marxist theory, questioning whether we might not have to ask ourselves if it were valid.

Before we close this section let us spend a few minutes on Hegel's World-Spirit. The old boy spent years on it, all his life, but I cannot help thinking of it as one of the funniest things in philosophy. See if you do not find it funny.

Hegel was determined to have Nature and Society the source of impulse, etc., for thinking. No nonsense there. He never budged from that. But he wanted a system, an enclosed system, with no loose ends. So this is what he does. He says there is a World-Spirit that was, is, and will ever be, etc. But, he says, the concrete form of this World-Spirit is Nature. The World-Spirit moves and therefore Nature moves in harmony. But philosophers get the impulses, etc., from the movement of Nature (and Society). They develop these impulses in philosophy. So that Nature and Society represent the World-Spirit objectively, and Philosophy represents it in theory. So that World-Spirit or no World-Spirit, Hegel put his philosophy on a very firm materialist basis—but always argued that this materialist basis was really World-Spirit assuming an objective form.

Out of fairness to Hegel it must be said that he recognized the need for an organizing principle which would tie the different stages together. He knew that logically speaking the developing forms of Nature, the developing forms of philosophy, had to be analysed within terms of some system. He could not find it in the development of labour. Where else to find one? He simply made up this one, and ever after preached it with utmost vigour. I think it funny. Am I

alone? OK. Forget it.

But though many things Hegel says come from this World-Spirit business and at any time you will get phrases, passages, ideas which make sense only in terms of this, when he is dealing with scientific method or the science of thought, he is the most rigid of materialists, and in one sense he can be said to have practised and taught a very materialist form of dialectic. That is why we can go on with his actual words and not be embarrassed by the World-Spirit business.

Object of the Investigation

Now we have established Hegel's great contribution, in his own mind, at least to be this: that you examine, and see that you do it, both the things that you test and the instruments by which you test them.

Let us attempt a modern grade of examining the party. The party is the proletarian consciousness. I do not mean the Communist Party in the United States, or the Workers' Party or the Socialist Workers' Party or such; least of all do I mean the Johnson-Forest Tendency. God preserve us from such methodological follies. When we think of the party of the proletariat we mean for example the Second International in 1914. It represented the most decisive layers of the workers. It didn't? OK, OK. It *thought* it did. The workers *thought* it did. It spoke, it expounded, it organized, it gave orders, they were obeyed. Conceive of the proletariat as a personality, one vast I, and the party is its consciousness. Now every consciousness we know has two movements, its notion of the thing, and its ordinary knowledge of the thing. The Second International had its notions and categories, they were Marxian at the start and it had its day-to-day work a day knowledge of the objects it dealt with. It began with Marxian categories, Hegelian dialectic, inevitability of capitalist collapse, etc. But its theoreticians were some of the most serious people. Bernstein under the blows, impulses, etc. of capitalist prosperity, changed the categories, for revolution he substituted peaceful democratic means, for the Hegelian dialectic he substituted the critical philosophy of Kant. He changed categories and the way to think about categories.

Now what were the impulses, the mutable shocks which finally crystallized in the web of Bernstein's mind as knots of arrest and direction? It is obvious that they were partly capitalistic. The revolutionary proletariat did not send impulses into his mind to strengthen and develop the categories and direction of marxism. We know that Kautsky and the others who opposed Bernstein did so half-heartedly and at the critical moment, and by their subsequent conduct showed that they had also done subconsciously what he had done consciously.

Proletarian impulses then, Bernstein got none, or none to speak of. So he changed his notions, and then his objects, his capitalism and his proletariat changed also. *It seemed also that the consciousness of the proletariat changed, in so far as the party represented proletarian consciousness.* (We are not dealing with isolated individuals like Liebknecht.)

But the objective proletariat had not changed its categories at all. It did not. It does not work by categories. In 1917 and in 1918-20 it burst all over Europe. It wiped away the old ones and created, all by itself, a new one, the soviet, all by itself. Not a god-damned soul had told it anything about soviets.

The thought, the categorizing process of the proletariat expressed itself in revolutionary mass action. While Bernstein and the whole organized consciousness of the proletariat made its way to *the exact opposite* of the categories with which they began, the proletariat extended the concrete dimensions of the labour movement, gave the theoreticians a new category and created a new consciousness, the Third International.

That is the *first*, a very *general* statement, of what took place and *how* it took place. Now the Hegelian logic would begin by saying: when you looked at the categories in 1889, at the time that the Second International propounded them did you *know in advance* that its categories had within them the inherent power of moving forward in the direction of something new, a new organization of consciousness, a new party, and held at the same time in them the tendency to become their opposite? If you didn't know that, he would say, you don't know the beginning of dialectic. The object was proletarian, and furthermore, revolutionary and socialistic. We are talking about the proletariat, that is our object, not geology, or seafood. So that the proletarian categories would be fundamentally of the proletariat. But they could swing to their opposite, i.e. become permeated through and through with a capitalist content, as far as that was possible without smashing the initial concept of the proletariat as proletariat. Or the consciousness would move further along the road of finding truer, more rich, more clear, i.e. more concrete, categories of its own truly proletarian nature, its unending fight against capital. It would develop its notion of itself, and therefore see the initial stage it had reached more clearly. The Second International was one strong knot. After a conflict, a new strong knot would be the Third International. *But:* a Hegelian would say as soon as the Third International was formed, I would *know* that the same conflict of tendencies existed inside it, and would go on until the proletariat found its true self, i.e. got rid of capitalism, whereupon it would not be proletariat at all, but a new organism. Every new stage marked a wider, deeper, more concrete notion and therefore a clearer grasp of the actual stage of existence of the proletariat. He would know all this in 1889, though he would not be certain when the new organism, i.e. socialism, would come. But until it came this process would go on.

How to grasp the contradictions within the proletariat itself, you would ask, the contradiction between its consciousness and its being, the fact that at one and the same time in its consciousness, Bernsteinism and leninism would be in such conflict, a conflict which the proletariat would solve in consciousness, in its party, only to start again? A Hegelian dialectician would reply: "The proletariat is not an independent organism. It is a part of capital. Therefore any contradiction in it will be a special form of the general contradiction between capital and labour; you shouldn't ask stupid questions—you should know that to begin with. The contradiction between the proletariat and its consciousness is the contradiction within the proletariat of capital and labour. When I say capital, I imply labour. When I say labour, I imply capital. There can be no labour, i.e., wage-labour, without capital. There can be no capital without wage-labour. When I say father, I have in mind son. If I didn't mean son, I would say man. Same with capital and labour. If the opposition, the contradiction between the proletariat and its consciousness were not a part, a form, of the contradiction between capital and labour they would not be serious.

We agree. But yet we face this. These categories of 1889 have been knocked to hell, year after year, they were even formally changed. What capitalistic impulses could wreak such damage in the consciousness of the proletariat? Enter Lenin who asked himself precisely this question in 1914. And he found an objective answer. The proletariat as *object* had changed. Imperialism had created a layer of bourgeoisified workers. Bernstein's mind was not receiving capitalistic impulses in general. The knots that had formed in his mind and which he clarified were the result of impulses from a very special section of the proletariat, the labour aristocracy. Old Stuff. Ho! The conflict in the consciousness of the proletariat was the result of an objective conflict in the object. Any profound, pronounced, long-maintained change in categorization *must* be the result of changes in the object. The greatest -violence done to that mode of thought was done by Trotsky. He was attacked by Lenin in 1915 for saying that "gradualism" had overtaken the Second International. In 1923 he was still saying the same thing in the *New Course*. He then transformed this method to The Third International. Never once did he ask himself: what objective basis is there for the Third International, this extraordinarily powerful and concrete force? It is an amazing thing. Until 1938 there is not a *line* in his writing which asks that question. He began by saying that the theory of socialism in a single country would end in their joining the bourgeoisie. He had analysed them in terms of tools of the Kremlin, and of a theory, Stalin's false theory. When he thought his theory had been justified, he gave them *Lenin's old basis*. To this day, not a soul in the Fourth International has *asked* that question. Not one. And yet these people would sneer at Hegel as an idealist. So that all the changes in thought we shall deal with, for us have an objective basis. I can't keep on saying it.

So far we have:

1. The changes in the categories of the Second International.
2. The changes are from a proletarian ideology of 1889 to a capitalistic ideology of say, 1900, without however losing its proletarian identity.
3. The proletariat violently changes this and creates a new concretization.
4. We seek and find an *objective* basis for Bernsteinism.
5. We now have a concept broader, deeper, and richer than in 1889. We put it in order, organize it in thought.
6. We find that the objective has changed. The, proletariat now is itself at divided object. Categories of the proletariat assume an importance they never had.

Thus by 1919, the foundation of the Third International has a new armoury of weapons and a new set of objects. We also have new “directions”, i.e., new perspectives. Let us organize them backwards and forwards.

There are contradictions in the First International, Proudhonists, Bakuninists and then the Marxists. The Proudhonists and Bakuninists represented the petty-bourgeois capitalistic influences in the proletariat. The conflict was not too sharp. It was solved in the Commune. Marxism triumphed because of the decline of the petty-bourgeois individualism in capitalism as a whole.

The Second International was marxist through and through. But bourgeoisified workers triumphed in it and the conflict was solved by the revolutionary wave of 1917-20. The objective division in the proletariat has now become deeper, clearer than it was in 1864-71. It expresses itself in two organizations. It is ridiculous not to know in advance that all the old categories will have changed completely.

By 1948 the objective division of the proletariat is much more clearly marked. The old labour aristocracy is on the decline. A new caste of labour administrators of capital, politicians and union men combined are the completest expression within the labour movement of capital so far. We say:

1. They have an objective basis in that they and their supporters perform a *function*. They are a development from Proudhonists and Bakuninists, through Bernstein to Thorez and Togliatti.
2. They reflect the present stage of capital, state capital, as Proudhon and Bakunin reflected the petty-bourgeois capital, and Bernstein reflected liberal capitalism. They reflect the totalitarian, managerial, bureaucratic, planned necessities of capital.
3. They will be completely overthrown, defeated as the mass upheaval of the Commune defeated the Proudhonists, 1917-20, the mass upheaval of revolutionary Europe defeated the Second International.

4. Each successive stage is more and more counter-revolutionary because capital is more and more counter-revolutionary.

The development of the antagonistic elements in the labour movement is clear: constantly higher stages, sharper conflicts of development between it as object and it as consciousness, *increasingly violent and profound attempts by the masses to break through this*.

Much of this is in *The Invading Socialist Society*³⁹—in highly concentrated form. There are innumerable other aspects. A book would be needed to trace them all, but what I was aiming at here is to outline the materials we shall use and outline a “schema of development”. We have one, and now we can show a grand conclusion, to use a word Hegel was fond of. It is obvious that the conflict of the proletariat is between itself as object and itself as consciousness, its party. The party has a dialectical development of its own. The solution of the conflict is the fundamental abolition of this division. The million in the Communist Party in France, the two and a half millions in Italy, their domination of the union movement, all this shows that the proletariat wants to abolish this distinction which is another form of the capitalist division between intellectual and manual labour. The revolutionary party of this epoch will be organized labour itself and the revolutionary petty bourgeoisie. The abolition of capital and the abolition of the distinction between the proletariat as object and proletariat as consciousness will be one and the same process. That is our *new notion* and it is with those eyes that we examine what the proletariat is in actuality. Compare this with “tools of the Kremlin”.

Note that the Transitional‘-Program stopped at the seizure of power. Lenin did not have a socialist programme up to February 1917. He did not know what to say. Nobody knew. But February showed him the way and he feverishly got to work on *State and Revolution* and *The Threatening Catastrophe*, and *Will the Bolsheviks Retain State Power?*

Today we are still where we were before February 1917. We do not see that today socialist construction is an integral part of the preparation for the revolution. We are waiting for February before we begin. In *The Invading Socialist Society* we asked Germain: Have you nothing to say about this? He is still so stuck in his old categories that I doubt he understood us. He, like Shachtman, believes that the workers are more backward, politically and organizationally, than in 1914. We could only say that he did not understand the marxist method. This is a more detailed exposition in the highly important sphere of thought.

But we did not do this for Germain, someone will say. What has the *Logic* to do with all this? Dope! You have just had a concrete exposition of the *Logic*. Very much in general. That is the Hegelian method. You take it in general and

then penetrate deeper and deeper.

Method of the Investigation

There must be no impatience. For decades everybody has been content to read Plekhanov and a few scraps. And I know the difficulties of this study. Go slowly. Lay a solid foundation. Watch his prefaces and his introductions. There he gives the important principles. I propose to take one from the *Logic* and one from the *Phenomenology*.

The one and only thing *for securing scientific progress* (and for quite *simple* insight into which, it is essential to strive)—is knowledge of the logical precept that Negation is just as much Affirmation as Negation, or that what is self-contradictory resolves itself not into nullity, into abstract Nothingness, but essentially only into the negation of its *particular* content, that such negation is not an all-embracing Negation, but is *the negation of a definite somewhat* which abolishes itself, and thus is a definite negation; and that thus the result contains in essence that from which it results—which is indeed a tautology, for otherwise it would be something immediate and not a result. Since what results, the negation, is a *definite* negation, it has a *content*. It is a new concept, but a higher, richer concept than that which preceded; for it has been enriched by the negation or opposite of that preceding concept, and thus contains it, but contains also more than it, and is the unity of it and its opposite.⁴⁰

It is a very solemn passage. *Know this*, says Hegel. And then a very difficult statement. Strive, he says, for “quite *simple* insight” into it. Read the passage again, clause by clause; higher, richer, *definite* negation, negation of a *somewhat*, including the preceding.

That is what stalinism is. It has negated leninism. But it has not gone back to Menshevism. I shall repeat this and repeat it. Stalinism leads workers who have absorbed leninism. These workers repudiate parliamentarianism. They repudiate private property. They repudiate national defence. They act with each other across national boundaries. Leninism has been taken over into stalinism. As a *conception of reaction* stalinism is infinitely further advanced than Menshevism. The importance of this for the revolution is only equalled by the blindness to it. Germain and, I believe, many of his friends, believe stalinism is a retrogression from Menshevism. Trotsky is terribly confused on this point. At any rate he left a terrible confusion behind him. All his ideas prevented him from saying this. Now read Hegel slowly, and see why he says that this was “the one and only thing”.

Now for a final exposition of the method to clinch it. You remember

everything depended on grasping the ultimate truth not as Substance but as Subject as well. On that page he writes a difficult but pregnant and characteristically Hegelian paragraph. This thing isn't easy. To hold it in your head, to look at all things that way, not to read and say yes, but to read and re-read until it sinks in and though you step back often, you know the way back and struggle to get it. No, my friends, it isn't easy. So bear with me if I go over one more paragraph with you. You take up the *Logic* and the *Phenomenology*. You'll be glad enough to run back for help to the repetitions. Plekhanov is just a popularization and pretty vulgar at that. And Engels's essay on dialectic in *The Dialectic of Nature* is too elementary. It is here that we have something. So here goes.

The living substance, further, is that being which is truly subject, or, what is the same thing; is truly realized and actual [wirklich] solely in the process of positing itself, or in mediating with its own self its transitions from one state or position to the opposite.⁴¹

Read it again, slowly. Practice. The living substance, the genuine proletarian movement, is that which is truly subject, i.e. active, becoming increasingly conscious of itself. This is the same as saying that it becomes truly realized and actual, takes concrete form in some international proletarian organization but in doing so always posits itself, i.e. has within it an opposition which must develop and which it will overcome. In this way it moves from one state to another, a transition. Thus in its own particular form it finds in its contradiction the *means* whereby it will move on. So the Second International found Bernsteinism and by its conflict with it was able to arrive at leninism. So leninism found in it stalinism, and in conflict with it will arrive at a moment which will have conquered all obstacles and arrived at a full understanding and realization of itself. This is called mediating with its own self.

As subject it is pure and simple negativity, and just on that account a process of splitting up what is simple and undifferentiated, a process of duplicating and setting factors in opposition, which (process) in turn is the negation of this indifferent diversity and of the opposition of factors it entails.⁴²

Read it again. Get yourself familiar with the idea of and with reading him. It is from lack of this preliminary work that so many attempts failed. Now to interpret.

As subject, i.e. as active agent, in life, as consciousness in thought, the labour movement is simply a constant negation of unsatisfactory forms. Just because it

is this negativity it must do it in a certain way. A thing like the doctrine of 1889 or leninism looks simple and undifferentiated, but negativity is going to negate them; but not by just wiping them away but by splitting them into two factors, Bernsteinism and leninism, stalinism and the Fourth International, setting the factors in opposition. This process in its turn negates the splitting up and the opposition. Leninism conquered Bernsteinism and gave subject and substance a new unity on a higher plane. The Fourth International will conquer stalinism, and with parliamentarism, defence of private property, national defence and now bureaucratization completely, organically conquered, and 'all learnt in bitter experience by the masses, they will have arrived in action at a realization of themselves. It a shameful crime to fasten national defence and support of the totalitarian state on Russian workers *today*. The Russian workers do not hear us, but other workers do and that cuts us and them off from understanding the world today.

True reality is merely this process of re-instating self-identity, of reflecting into its own self in and from its other, and is not an original and primal unity as such, not an immediate unity as such.⁴³

To know true reality, to understand the labour movement, is to know that at each stage it degenerates but splits to re-instate its self-identity, its unity, but that this unity comes from divisions within its own self. It is not a unity which is there from the beginning nor is it a unity which you can see as soon as you look at the thing.

It is the process of its own becoming, the circle which pre-supposes its end as its purpose, and has its end for its beginning; it becomes concrete and actual only by being carried out, and by the end it involves.⁴⁴

The labour movement is these various stages, splits, reunifications, etc. After we have looked at it for a little time we can work out where it is going and we can see that this ultimate end is the purpose which animates it in all its movement, degeneration, opposition, splits, unifications, etc. But although this ultimate purpose guides us and seems to guide it, the ultimate will be reached only by becoming concrete stage after concrete stage. There is no other way.

Then comes a phrase which Grace loves. I have underlined it. You can talk a lot of high-falutin' nonsense about socialism (or, if you like, God) and love and revolutionary masses, etc. etc., but this bitter process is the way—it is not worth a damn "*if it lacks the seriousness, the suffering, the patience and the labour of the negative.*" (Emphasis added.)

And skipping a bit:

The truth is the whole. The whole, however, is merely the essential nature reaching its completeness through the process of its own development.⁴⁵

Stalinism is a bitter obstacle. But see it as part of a process. Through the process of its own development, the seriousness, the suffering, the patience, and the labour of the negative, the labour movement goes through all its experiences and reaches its completely realized self only by conquering them one after the other. And only at the end, when the labour movement finds itself fully realized will we see what it is in very truth. The notion will be completed when the form it takes is final and its individuality, its concreteness, is the adequate expression of both the content of the universal and the particular form which has now become a Universal.

And now having sweated up to here, a rest is needed before plunging into the logic itself.

Here lies
G. W. F. Hegel
R.I.P.
He deserves it

Part II

The Hegelian Logic

The Doctrine of Being

PRELIMINARY EXERCISES

You know, as I propose to myself to begin the actual *Logic*, I feel a slight chill. The *Doctrine of Being*. Harris, who ultimately wrote a very fine work on the Hegelian *Logic*, was a professor of philosophy and lecturer on Hegel at second-hand. Brockmeyer, Governor of Missouri, made a translation of the larger *Logic* and someone gave it to Harris. Harris says that he copied out the thing with his own hand, the whole thing, and when he was finished, he didn't understand a line, not a line. I know exactly how he felt.

What I propose to do is to use the *Doctrine of Being* as a means of getting practice in the style and habit of Hegel. The larger *Logic* is the most difficult book I know. Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* is child's play compared to it. But we have to be able to handle it. So while we shall get the main points of the *Doctrine of Being*, look upon this as a kind of basic training, before we get down to it in the *Doctrine of Essence*. I am *not* giving a summary of the *Logic*. I am not expanding it as a doctrine. I am using it and showing how to begin to know it and use it.

Think of the world of human beings, nearly two billions, more than that perhaps. What is the simplest thing you can say about them? They exist. Two billion people exist. So what! To say that is to say—nothing. To say something so broad, so complete, so *abstract*, is to say nothing. Something must happen, must come out of this abstraction. I say: some men work. The previous abstraction has now *become* something. Some men work. Let us look at the men who work. They at once, by being distinguished, create another category, the people who do not work. You cannot separate one category without creating another one. To create a category is to "determine" something. But every time you determine something, you negate something. Every time. By determining men who work, we negate them as men who merely exist, but we also negate the men who do not work. They are no longer men who merely exist. That is over. They are men who do not work. Whenever you do something, you at the same time do *not* do something else. A silver coin on a green table negated the green cover on the particular spot where it rests. It creates the spot where the

coin is and the spot where the coin is not.

Now we have men who work. That is the quality which distinguishes them. When something “becomes” out of the mass it has a “quality”. The quality we take is work. But as you pile up the men who work, you catalogue them, work is not enough. Some are tailors, some shoemakers, some cowboys, some engineers. The list is endless. Some work well, some badly. Some work well but stay at home every morning. We soon find ourselves concerned with more than quality. We find that we must look not at quality but at *quantity* of work. Preoccupation with quality has led us to *quantity*. But quantity too is limited. The more you contemplate it, deal with it, you find that it is impossible to keep tab of the quantity of work of tailors, cooks, deep-sea divers by measuring work in the abstract. You have to get some common *measure*. The three divisions of the Doctrine of Being are Quality, Quantity, and Measure.

This is a crude, but in my opinion, quite adequate, example of Hegel’s method. That is what I am after. Kant and the others would know and use Quality, Quantity, and Measure. What Hegel insisted upon is that these are connected, that one developed out of the other. Quantity came at a certain time because quality upon quality does not go on being quality but at a certain stage becomes something new. Hegel takes Quality and Quantity as abstractions to represent processes present in all aspects of nature, society and thought. Water is a quality, a small stream negates the surrounding land. It is a stream because it is no longer land. If it grows and grows, it becomes a river, and a number of rivers meeting in one place can become an inland sea.

Hegel’s own categories are much more profound, of course. He says: think not of men, but of everything that exists, that has some “being”. Think of the whole world not as men, land, sky, horses, air, buildings. Just think of it in its capacity of existing. Pure absolute being. Good. But when you think that, you are thinking—nothing. Pure being—pure nothing. Something emerges, it “becomes” and you have “being determinate”. It has a quality. But a coin on a table negates some of the table. So that “Determinate Being” is Being-for-self but *always* being-for-another. Men who work are one being, being-for-self, but they are also automatically being-for-another, men-who-do-not-work. Quality means that a *limit* is imposed, a *barrier* between itself and its other.

If we take a closer look at what a limit implies, we see it involving a contradiction in itself, and thus evincing its dialectical nature. On the one side limit makes the reality of a thing; on the other it is its negation. But, again, the limit, as the negation of something, is not an abstract nothing but a nothing which is—what we call an “other”. Given something, and up starts an other to us: we know that there is not something only, but an other as well. Nor, again, is the other of such a nature that we can think something apart from it; a

something is implicitly the other of itself, and the somewhat sees its limit become objective to it in the other. If we now ask for the difference between something and another, it turns out that they are the same: which sameness is expressed in Latin by calling the pair *aliad-aliud*. The other, as opposed to the something, is itself a something, and hence we say some other, or something else; and so on the other hand the first something when opposed to the other, also defined as something, is itself an other. When we say “something else” our first impression is that something taken separately is only something, and that the quality of being another attaches to it only from outside considerations.

Thus we suppose that the moon, being something else than the sun, might very well exist without the sun. But really the moon, as a something, has its other implicit in it. Plato says: God made the world out of the nature of the “one” and the “other”: having brought these together, he formed from them a third, which is of the nature of the “one” and the “other”. In these words we have in general terms a statement of the nature of the finite, which, as something, does not meet the nature of the other as if it had no affinity to it, but, being implicitly the other of itself, thus undergoes alteration. Alteration thus exhibits the inherent contradiction which originally attaches to determinate being, and which forces it out of its own bounds.

... But the fact is, mutability lies in the notion of existence, and change is only the manifestation of what it implicitly is. The living die, simply because as living they bear in themselves the germ of death.⁴⁶

That is the core of the Doctrine of Being. Something immediately involves something else. Continue with something like quality, and its other, quantity, will take form. A completely abstract something is the same as nothing, that is its other. Something “Becomes” out of nothing. It always has its limit, its barrier. And this limit, barrier, is burst through, at a certain stage, to establish the other, its other. All this takes place in the sphere of determinate being, simple quality.

Let me take an example of what the method of the *Logic* signifies. The proletariat politically is an undistinguished body of proletarians. Something “becomes”. Some of them form a party. At once the proletariat is no longer party and proletarians. It is party and non-party, or as we say, party and mass. The party creates its other, the mass. But you can have one, two, three, four parties. One obvious way to distinguish is by size. That is not sufficient, however. For political purposes we can judge by “support”, a form of quantity. But support changes. Out of support we can arrive at what in the last analysis decided support—policy. That is a form of Measure. Whenever you examine any object, you can begin by looking for its obvious distinguishing quality, the quantity of *this* quality, and the measure of it.

Bit by bit we go a step further, like an experienced man bringing along a virgin who has willingly consented. Grace is probably tearing her hair at the vulgarity of some of my illustrations. They are better than the perpetual water

turning into steam which everybody uses from Engels. But I don't want to leave it there. For us Doctrine of Being is a road to practise to get familiar with the method, the concrete method, the method of dealing with Hegel's matter and manner. Do not be misled by the extract I have given you from the smaller *Logic*. There he is being friendly, considerate and kind. In the larger *Logic* he is ruthless. He puts down the most difficult, complicated idea in a clause of three words. He creates terms, three, four, five, and uses them as if they were letters of the alphabet. So let us use this interlude as training. Now for this quality into quantity business. Hegel uses the One and the Many as his illustration.

Common sense thinks one is one, and over here, and many is some, and over there. In other words. One has a special *quality*, and they begin there and stay there. Hegel says No. Philosophy tells us that One presupposes Many. The moment I say One, I have thereby created the category Many. In fact it is the existence of the Many which makes the One possible at all. If there were no Many, One would be whatever you wish but it would not be One meaning this one, in contrast with many others. The One therefore is *repellent*. To be, it repels the Many. It is *exclusive*, but it is not quiescent. It is actively repelling the Many, for otherwise its specific quality as One would be lost. This is *Repulsion*. But, all the other Ones who constitute the Many have a connecting relation with it. They thereby have a connective relation with each other; the One, by holding them all off, makes them all join together against it. But each of these is a One, too. Thus the One begins by Repulsion but creates in every other single One an attraction. Thus, the One when you begin with it is a Quality, but by examining first and following what is involved to the end, you turn up with a new category, Quantity, with the original pure and simple Quality suppressed and superseded.

Here is the complete extract:

The One, as already remarked, just is self-exclusion and explicit putting itself as the Many. Each of the Many however is itself a One, and in virtue of its so behaving, this all rounded repulsion is by one stroke converted into its opposite—Attraction.⁴⁷

The thing that Hegel insists upon is not to see the One as fixed, finite, limited, isolated. It is One because there are Many, and because of that the original category of One begins to assume new facets and suddenly they are the very opposite of what you began with. As Hegel knows and says you can (if you want to) make a lot of jokes about these transitions. His fundamental answer is that you have to go along with him and see where you get and what you get. Anyone who has had a class on *Capital* knows that there are certain types who passionately contest every sentence, every deduction. In the end

they always turn up in the bourgeois camp. It is the revolution they are fighting. The Hegelian categories offer infinite opportunity for this. We, however, not only have our past traditions. We have had a very substantial introduction here, and can afford to follow him. As a matter of fact, few people challenge the broad divisions of the Doctrine of Being. I have seen these basic premises challenged, but the writer said that if you admitted those, you could not seriously oppose him after.

Now let Hegel himself speak. I give some lengthy extracts from the smaller *Logic*.

The transition from Quality to Quantity, indicated in the paragraph before us, is not found in our ordinary way of thinking which deems each of these categories to exist independently beside the other. We are in the habit of saying that things are not merely qualitatively, but also quantitatively defined; but whence these categories originate, and how they are related to each other, are questions not further examined. The fact is, quantity just means quality superseded and absorbed: and it is by the dialectic of quality here examined that this supersession is effected. First of all, we had being: as the truth of Being, came Becoming: which formed the passage to Being Determinate: and the truth of that we found to be Alteration. And in its result Alteration showed itself to be Being-for-self, exempt from implication of another and from passage into another; which Being-for-self finally in the two sides of its process, Repulsion and Attraction, was clearly seen to annul itself, and thereby to annul quality in the totality of its stages. Still this superseded and absorbed quality is neither an abstract nothing, nor an equally abstract and featureless being: it is only being as indifferent to determinateness or character. This aspect of being is also what appears as quantity in our ordinary conceptions. We observe things, first of all, with an eye to their quality—which we take to be the character identical with the being of the thing. If we proceed to consider their quantity, we get the conception of an indifferent and external character or mode, of such a kind that a thing remains what it is though its quantity is altered, and the thing becomes greater or less.⁴⁸

Then he works through Quantity and arrives at Measure. These he sums up so far:

Thus quantity by means of the dialectical movement so far studied through its several stages, turns out to be a return to quality. The first notion of quantity presented to us was that of quality abrogated and absorbed. That is to say, quantity seemed an external character not identical with Being, to which it is quite immaterial. This notion, as we have seen, underlies the mathematical definition of magnitude as what can be increased or diminished. At first sight this definition may create the impression that quantity is merely whatever can

be altered—increase and diminution alike implying determination of magnitude otherwise—and may tend to confuse it with determinate Being, the second stage of quality, which in its notion is similarly conceived as alterable. We can, however, complete the definition by adding, that in quantity we have an alterable, which in spite of alterations still remains the same. The notion of quantity, it thus turns out, implies an inherent contradiction. This contradiction is what forms the dialectic of quantity. The result of the dialectic however is not a mere return to quality, as if that were the true and quantity the false notion, but an advance to the unity and truth of both, to qualitative quantity, or Measure.⁴⁹

This is worth pondering over, it is not too difficult. There Hegel says something which he often repeats, as I have shown before. Men it seems could be as stupid then as now. He is talking about Nature where simple determinate being, quality, abounds. Measure is a very *low* stage of the dialectical logic. And Hegel says:

It may be well therefore at this point to observe that whenever in our study of the objective world we are engaged in quantitative determinations, it is in all cases Measure which we have in view, as the goal of our operations. This is hinted at even in language, when the ascertainment of quantitative features and relations is called measuring.⁵⁰

Now come two splendid examples of the dialectical relation between quality, quantity, and measure:

We measure, e.g. the length of different chords that have been put into a state of vibration, with an eye to the qualitative difference of the tones caused by their vibration, corresponding to this difference of length. Similarly, in chemistry, we try to ascertain the quantity of the matters brought into combination, in order to find out the measures or proportions conditioning such combination, that is to say, those quantities which give rise to definite qualities.⁵¹

Then comes a really superb passage in which you see what the *Logic* meant to him and how he used it. It is very long. But this is in its way an anthology and I would like it in:

The identity between quantity and quality, which is found in Measure, is at first only implicit, and not yet explicitly realised. In other words, these two categories, which unite in Measure, each claim an independent authority. On

the one hand, the quantitative features of existence may be altered, without affecting its quality. On the other hand, this increase and diminution, immaterial though it be, has its limit, by exceeding which the quality suffers change. Thus the temperature of water is, in the first place, a point of no consequence in respect of its liquidity: still with the increase of diminution of the temperature of the liquid water, there comes a point where this state of cohesion suffers a qualitative change, and the water is converted into steam or ice. A quantitative change takes place, apparently without any further significance: but there is something lurking behind, and a seemingly innocent change of quantity acts as a kind of snare, to catch hold of the quality. The antinomy of Measure which this implies was exemplified under more than one garb among the Greeks. It was asked, for example, whether a single grain makes a heap of wheat, or whether it makes a bald-tail to tear out a single hair from the horse's tail. At first, no doubt, looking at the nature of quantity as an indifferent and external character of being, we are disposed to answer these questions in the negative. And yet, as we must admit, this indifferent increase and diminution has its limit: a point is finally reached, where a single additional grain makes a heap of wheat; and the bald-tail is produced, if we continue plucking out single hairs. These examples find a parallel in the story of the peasant who, as his ass trudged cheerfully along, went on adding ounce after ounce to its load, till at length it sunk under the unendurable burden. It would be a mistake to treat these examples as pedantic futility; they really turn on thoughts, an acquaintance with which is of great importance in practical life, especially in ethics. Thus in the matter of expenditure, there is a certain latitude within which a more or less does not matter; but when the Measure, imposed by the individual circumstances of the special case, is exceeded on the one side or the other, the qualitative nature of Measure (as in the above examples of the different temperature of water) makes itself felt, and a course, which a moment before was held good economy, turns into avarice or prodigality. The same principles may be applied in politics, when the constitution of a state has to be looked at as independent of, no less than as dependent on, the extent of its territory, the number of its inhabitants, and other quantitative points of the same kind. If we look, e.g. at a state with a territory of ten thousand square miles and a population of four millions we should, without hesitation, admit that a few square miles of land or a few thousand inhabitants more or less could exercise no essential influence on the character of its constitution. But on the other hand, we must not forget that by the continual increase or diminishing of a state, we finally get to a point where, apart from all other circumstances, this quantitative alteration alone necessarily draws with it an alteration in the quality of the constitution. The constitution of a little Swiss canton does not suit a great kingdom; and, similarly, the constitution of the Roman republic was unsuitable when transferred to the small imperial towns of Germany.⁵²

That is about all we need.

Now for a little recapitulation and a jumping-off place into Essence. Being means quality, determinate being. It comes out of Nothing. It deals with the

categories of other determinate beings that one determinate being automatically creates. But Measure as the last stage of such Being which creates other over there. The dialectic of Measure leads it into Essence, where being is no longer simply determinate. It is *reflected*. We now begin to see an object whose parts are separated by thought. One part creates an other, true, but the other is inherent in the object itself, not one object here and another over there, but the object splits into related categories that are both contained within the object itself.

This has been very quiet, very easy. The smaller *Logic* is worth reading on the Doctrine of Being in particular. I have purposely kept the pitch low. Just read and get acquainted. For after this we are going to begin to go places and it is going to be hectic.

The Doctrine of Essence

ESSENCE IS A MOVEMENT OF NEGATION

Here goes then, right into the heart of it, and take the worst first. Brace yourself:

Becoming in Essence—its reflective movement—is hence the movement from Nothing to Nothing and through Nothing back to itself. The transition or Becoming transcends itself in its transition: that Other which arises in the course of this transition is not the Not-being of a Being, but the Nothing of a Nothing—which constitutes Being—Being exists only as the movement of Nothing to Nothing, and thus is Essence; and Essence does not contain this movement in itself but is this movement, an absolute Show and pure negativity, which has nothing without it that could negate it, but negates only its own negativity, which is only in this negation.⁵³

It is as tough a passage as you can have. Yet we can break its back. Just try to remember. Hegel *must* write this way. If he said, as we do, the labour movement this and that, or atomic energy, or the theory of the state, he would at once *limit* himself. The reader would think of this as *politics* or whatever it was Hegel had chosen. The movement would be from politics to something else, then to something else, and so on *ad infinitum*. Besides it would, I *feel* sure, limit his freedom of analysis. He examines instead an infinite number of processes, studies the relation between stages, and extracts, abstracts the essential movement. Besides, as I read him, I get the impression that from the study of phenomena and the methods of other philosophers he had learnt to handle these abstractions by themselves, and as a man does in mathematics,

push them further by their own movement. So they have to be accepted as valid.

We are to take this passage *all* ways, worry it like a dog. What is the central idea? The thing that I want you to notice is where he says Essence does not contain a movement, but is that movement.

Imagine a spirit, a genie Ariel, a disembodied being flitting around in the spiritual void. He does not know who he is or what he is. But he wants to find out and he has been told that inside his spiritual constellation are a number of elements which periodically explode into an object, stone, flower, horse, ape, man, etc. He gets a chance in these to see what he really is. But he will know whether this is the real thing or not. If after a while he feels that this is not the real thing he dissolves it and he steps back again into a pure spirit. His only way of knowing anything about himself is to become one of the things that is in him. The day he becomes something and knows, feels, that this is it, then he is something new at last. He has we may say a notion of his true self at last. But, except as something that has become something for a while, he himself is a pure spirit, abstract, waiting in those cold regions.

The essence is the fact that something continually becomes something else and negates it because it isn't what the thing that is becoming wants to be. This "being" that it becomes, we know from the Doctrine of Being has "become" out of Nothing. All immediate being comes out of Nothing and can go back to nothing. The difference with Essence is that it creates a lot of different beings; they go back to nothing, but essence keeps on trying, for poor Essence is the fact that he has to keep on trying. He is a kind of being that does not rest at becoming nothing but from his very nature must keep on trying and trying again. We can now go back to the passage and concentrate on certain things.

Now we can do a *loose* paraphrase. (As far as Essence is concerned, the process of becoming is being, that is to say it comes from nothing, stays as being for a while and goes back to nothing, but thereby gets back to itself, which is the imperative necessity to "become" once more.) *Ordinary* being is the movement of nothing to being-for-other and going on, or maybe, just becoming and disappearing, and that's that. But Essence tries again. So that the being in which Essence tries to find itself is pure Show; it does not become a quality, which becomes a quantity, which becomes a Measure, etc. No, sir. Pure Show. Absolute Negativity. Show No. 1. No good. Negated. Show No. 2. Not what I am looking for—out with it into limbo. Show No. 3. No good. Negate it. Negate them all. One day we'll get to it (and we'll see a lot of things which we could not see before). But for the time being Essence can truly say, "Me! I know what I am by now. I am just Negativity, becoming something and negating it. I am a movement, me. Yes, that's it. I am movement of negation. But that isn't all of me. One day I'll find out." Essence of course does not know that there is a

logic to his negativity. A philosopher, a Hegelian philosopher, who was watching him through an atomic microscope would say: first he was a stone, then he was a flower, then he was a horse, then he was an ape, then he was a man. The poor abstraction doesn't know it, but I think one day he will be an angel. That's what all this restlessness and negativity must mean. But that of course does not concern us here.

Now from there into the labour movement.

We know what the labour movement is. It was at one time the 1848 revolutions, including Chartism, 1839-48. It took the form of the First International. It took the form of the Second International at its highest peak. The unions were also organised. There are asses who would say: the Commune, for example, took place in one city, how can you say that was a form of the whole labour movement? Think of all the millions and millions who had no connection with the Commune. Fools. Since 1917 the labour movement in country after country has repeatedly tried to imitate the Commune. Europe and Asia seethe with would-be Communards. So it is obvious that the Commune (in a single city) showed the pattern of the future—to the millions and millions in the hundreds and thousands of cities who perhaps paid little attention to the Commune—which was a form of nothing in particular. The Commune represented them.

So these forms show the labour movement going somewhere. But the 1848 revolutions, they came and went, the Commune came and went. The First International came and went. The Second International remains, but is a relic. Look at it in France—the Third Force. It is a joke. In France the two forces are De Gaulle and the Third International. Who chooses to bother himself about the Second International and Catholic workers is in the same position as those who did not understand that it was the Commune and not the apparently inert millions that was decisive for the future of Europe. Marx pounced on it.

But, as I say, these forms disappear. But the proletarian *movement* continues. They have an external being, and these vanish, the new external forms appear. We can always, if we are Marxists, see the form and what for the moment we will call the Essence. But the Essence is not *one* thing that changes. No, the form was the First International; the essence was the labour, the proletarian, the revolutionary movement of 1871, which was different from that of 1848. And we have established that the revolutionary movement today, the workers that follow Stalinism, are not the *same* workers who followed Menshevism. They are further advanced qualitatively, further advanced along the road of their ultimate goal.

The Commune, therefore, the First International, the 1905 struggles were just Being, they were Nothing. They did not exist, they existed, they did not exist

any more. They were from nothing and went back to nothing. But their experience, what they represented *was stored up*. It was not lost. Essence is a movement but a movement of stored up Being. The workers under Stalinism have the experience of Leninism. “Essence we may certainly regard as past Being, remembering however meanwhile that the past is not utterly denied, but only laid aside and thus at the same time preserved.”⁵⁴

The reactionary Third International has, stored up in it, the past being of Leninism which is gone—it exists no longer. Philosophers, Marxists, have to trace this.

The thing that continues to move, however, is the labour movement, the revolutionary movement itself. It stored up the experience of the follies and weaknesses of Proudhonism and Bakuninism. It learnt the value of organisation. It stored up the experience of parliamentarianism, national defence, etc. It became richer and richer. (It organised the ideas too, but always as a result of the objective movement, *changing, developing* capitalism.)

At a given moment, this proletarian movement looks like the First International or the Commune or 1917-20. And if you stop, look at it, and be precise about it, *as you have to do* (remember you cannot think unless you have fixed and precise determinations), then you see that the essential movement is *reflected* in the form. The First International reflected it, 1915 reflected it, etc. The reflections disappear. What they reflected is stored up and becomes part of the new proletariat. This process, the disappearance of the reflection, and the new proletariat with its experience of the reflection stored up in it, starting off again, this *process* is Essence. The essence of a thing is the fact that it must move, reflect itself, negate the reflection, which was nothing, become being, and then become nothing again, while the thing itself must move on because it is its nature to do so. That it must move, the consistent direction in which it moves, its necessity to negate its reflections, store them up, and go on to some ultimate goal, this is its Essence. The essence of the proletariat is its movement to incorporate in itself experience of the evils of capitalism until it overcomes capitalism itself. The essence of the proletariat is not that it is revolutionary and tries a lot of different parties and rejects them because they fail. It is not “an existent substratum”⁵⁵. It negates not only its reflection, it does more than that, it further negates its own experiences and stores them up, so it is always further than it was before in its own special purpose. Nor does it negate in general. (The quote will show.) Its negation is a specific negation of its own contradictions, inherent in capitalism and therefore inherent in it as inseparable from and in fact unthinkable except as an opposite to capitalism. And now, sentence by sentence.

Becoming in Essence—its reflective moment—is hence the movement from

Obvious. Commune, First International, Leninism, all, as existing entities, all pure being. The proletariat had a being, a certain feeling, ideas, impulses, desires, will. It gained these in its experience, objective experience with capitalism, with its past stored-up being. This was abstract being, abstract proletarian being. But abstract being is Nothing. The Nature of being is to become determinate. Just as thought organises impulses, desire, will, etc., the proletarian party organises itself, becomes determinate in Lenin, Bukharin, Trotsky, Rakovsky, the Bolshevik Party, the Third International, determinate being.

Leninism, therefore, the Third International, is a crystallisation of abstract being, which is Nothing. Leninism negates this nothing by becoming something. Then it is superseded by Stalinism. But the fact that this takes place is the essence of the proletariat. Its desires, will, impulses, needs (basically implanted in it by its position *vis-a-vis* capitalism) are always first abstract being, i.e., nothing, then take determinate form, then these vanish back into nothing, but their essence is stored up. The proletariat, in essence, has an Other, its reflection, but this just comes and goes.

The transition or Becoming transcends itself in its transition: that Other which arises in the course of this transition is not the Not being of a Being, but the Nothing of a Nothing; and it is this—the fact that it is the negation of a Nothing—which constitutes being.⁵⁷

This is an exercise in the development of the ideas of the Doctrine of Being. This passage contains the key. Read it slowly and get it:

Being exists only as the movement of Nothing to Nothing, and thus is Essence; and Essence does not contain this movement in itself but *is* this movement, an absolute Show and pure negativity, which has nothing without it that could negate it, but negates only its own negativity, which is only in this negation.⁵⁸

So that looking back we can see that we had one kind of being in quality, immediate being, which went its own way. Now we have another kind of being, Essence, which has its way, constant negativity of the Show, in which it must find itself. The rest of Essence is to trace the dialectical development of this Show, and the movement that constantly negates it. (I do not guarantee these interpretations. The point is once they are down we begin to Bet

somewhere. I am not afraid of mistakes.)

So now we have Essence. It is a form of *Reflection*. As Hegel describes it in the smaller *Logic*:

This word “reflection” is originally applied when a ray of light in a straight line impinging upon the surface of a mirror is thrown back from it. In this phenomenon we have two things, first an immediate fact which is, and secondly the deputed, derivated, or transmitted phase of the same. Something of this sort takes place when we reflect, or think upon an object; for here we want to know the object, not in its immediacy, but as derivative or mediated.⁵⁹

Mediated. A lovely word. Hug it to your bosom. I say, we say that people's consciousness is one thing, immediacy, an entity that we can say has “quality”. But as Marxists we know that consciousness is *in essence* the reflection of economic and political, i.e. social environment. The social background, therefore, is *mediated* through consciousness. In the doctrine of Being, quality was, if you like, mediated into quantity. In the Doctrine of Essence quality is, or rather would be a Show of something which is reflecting itself through quality. Hegel goes on:

The problem or aim of philosophy is often represented as the ascertainment of the essence of things: a phrase which only means that things instead of being left in their immediacy, must be shown to be mediated by, or based upon, something else. The immediate Being of things is thus conceived under the image of a rind or curtain behind which the Essence lies hidden.

The maestro is taking it easy. “Everything, it is said, has an Essence; that is, things really are not what they immediately show themselves. There is something more to be done than merely rove from one quality to another, and merely to advance from qualitative to quantitative and vice versa: there is a permanent in things and that permanent is in the first instance their Essence.”⁶⁰

That is simple enough. Why didn't I begin with it? No. Because that simple phrase “in the first instance” covers a lot and it would have given us a lot of trouble. You would have believed you understood something which you did not. The essence of consciousness is social environment. But you get there an impression that is static. It is only because consciousness is a kind of show, which must reflect environment, and environment *must* go on expressing itself, forever seeking, can we call it Essence. The importance of this cannot be overestimated. If you do not see that clearly, you get the conception of trying

this, trying that, trying the other. You soon say: it never seems to learn, because “it” is static. Then your essence becomes a thing. But when you see Essence as the movement, and the movement which stores up the superseded being, but yet is impelled to go on, then you have Essence in truth and in fact.

Now to know that Essence is a movement which reflects into a Show (which is dismissed) and then goes off again, to know this is only to know Essence in general. This is the beginning of Essence. Essence, a movement, moves on dialectically. The reflection and the thing reflected have their own life; they develop into different things and we trace them, and see how at each stage they change into something else. Hegel calls their most important form the Reflections of Determinations. Remember that for a long time they are creations of thought. For example, when you look at consciousness, you do not see it divided into consciousness and existence, to use Marx’s word. Consciousness is consciousness. Thought, however, makes this separation, these determinations of the object, into its component parts.

We see Leninism as a determination which reflects a certain stage of development of the perpetual movement. But Leninism is a thought-determination. There is the proletariat, in capitalist society, at a certain stage of development. To isolate what we call Leninism is a determination of thought. To isolate it as a fact and give it an independent life of its own, ah! Jesus, that is something that brings a terrible retribution. Listen to Hegel even before he begins to develop the Determinations of Reflection, telling us how certain people get stuck:

... the reflected determinations are of a kind different from the merely immediate determinations of Being. Of the latter it is easily admitted that they are transitory and merely relative, related to something other, while the reflected determinations have the form of Being-in-and-for-Self. They accordingly assert themselves as essential, and instead of passing over into their opposites, they appear rather as absolute, free, and indifferent to one another. They therefore stubbornly resist their movement: their Being is their self identity in their determinateness, according to which, while presupposing one another, they yet preserve themselves as absolutely separate in this relation.⁶¹

Leninism is Leninism and Stalinism is Stalinism; the Fourth International is the Fourth International. This is giving them the form of Being-in-and-for-Self. The above extract poses *the* problem. There is no need to take everything sentence by sentence. A looser interpretation is here indicated. (And Hegel will sing this song for nearly five hundred pages.) If you look at the “immediate” determinations of being, you see Leninism, and you say: it will pass; things

come and go. I remember the French consul in an island where I stayed who told me that the French politician Briand was a socialist in his youth, but there *always* arise people more to the left than you, which pushes you to the right. That idea appears to have movement, but it takes Briand and those “more left” than he as “immediates”. The reflection is external.

And Hegel (in the complete extract—I have left out some of the paragraph) says it is easy for serious thinkers to throw these external determinations aside. But when you think *seriously*, see the apparent being as merely reflections of essence, then these determinations become themselves *essential*. The Commune, the Second International, Leninism, Stalinism, etc., become “free”. They become independent of life. They live on after they are dead, and what does live on is dead—for Understanding. You see, you *know* you are a superior thinker. These determinations you have traced to their roots. They “presuppose” one another “of course”. Leninism is “in a way” connected with Menshevism, and Stalinism comes from Leninism. They are in inseparable connection with developing capitalism and the developing proletariat. “Of course, of course”, but yet they *are* kept “separate”. The individual thinker, having worked hard, overcome vulgar common sense, and established these, holds tight on to them. His creative energy is exhausted. Or his energy for organisation of concrete things is such that he throws himself into organisation within these categories. He would ordinarily do little harm. But when these marvellous, new categories were established, they came from the impulses, will, desire, etc., of people. And there are always some people who, for *objective reasons*, wish to stay right there. They catch hold of this individual and make him a hero. The Logic of Understanding has a base.

But there are some even *more* pathetic cases, and as I think of this, I am moved to tears. There is the powerful intellect and spirit which moves in categories that, once powerful in their day, now have no objective base. What wasted effort! What vain sacrifices! Hegel knew. All the time he keeps saying: “That is the enemy, thinking in the categories which were precise, but acquire independent life and do not move.” He is going to tell us about opposites and transition. That is the main content of Essence. But before he begins he says that this Understanding type of thought can strangle us before we can get started.

Identity, Difference and Contradiction, especially Contradiction

We now approach the core of Hegel’s system, in the three noted above. It must not, however, be forgotten that the larger *Logic* is nine hundred pages in all. Take for example the question of Ground which follows these three. Ground, says Hegel, is the real self-mediation of Essence. OK. And then he is off.

Absolute Ground which is further determined into Determined Ground, which he further analyses into Formal Ground and Real Ground, which finally ends up as Complete Ground. But the sub-divisions of Absolute Ground alone are (a) Form and Essence, (b) Form and Matter, (c) Form and Content. It is thirty-four pages in all. What the hell can we do with that? And yet it contains such crucial things as Form and Content, Existence, Appearance, Substance, and so on and on. You will read it for yourselves. My selections are arbitrary. We take bits. But in reality there are no arbitrary selections. My purpose, my knowledge of the *Logic*, my knowledge of the labour movement, my knowledge of my probable readers, are all at work deciding which bits I shall take. If my knowledge is not too superficial and my purpose not too narrow, a real insight into the *Logic* will be given and a real insight into the labour movement too. But we must know the limits of what we are doing. We are getting an idea of the thing, that's all. However, when it comes to Identity and Difference and Contradiction, I think we should make some attempt to follow his abstract method, as we did to some degree in the Doctrine of Being. They are, as I say, the core.

The treatment of Identity in the smaller *Logic* is one of the most baffling and most irritating things in Hegel. I suspect that a thorough knowledge of the old-fashioned logic would help. In any case Hegel seems to be saying something like this: "You see that tablecloth? It is more than a tablecloth; a thorough knowledge now of a tablecloth is absolutely necessary to understand logic; let us now go on to the next section."

My explanation, as many of my explanations, undoubtedly will commit violations. But you will probably learn something from it. I have read numbers of brief explanations of Hegel and the *Logic* in particular, which explained nothing. That is why I am using my own method. As the translators of the larger *Logic* say quite frankly: "We have no doubt that we have failed to understand the thought in many places. " I too know how easy it is to misinterpret. But that need not deter us. Now—

I look at something and in my view I get a picture of it (how I could tear *that* formulation to pieces!)—book, stone, horse, house, labour movement, scientific theory, dish of ice-cream. I define it to myself: I establish its identity. I can be quite precise. I say: that house, I designed it. I built it. I live in it. I know all about it. I can describe it, maybe make an inventory. That house is that house. What I write on the paper, the plans, the photographs, the memories, etc., all correspond to that house. But the conception— that house, which I think I have established so clearly, eludes me even as I establish it. The house is changing. (I am changing too, but forget that, or rather put it aside for the moment.) In two years that house will be another house: paint gone, holes in the roof, furniture waterlogged, grass growing in the patio. Instead of that house being in Class A that house has degenerated into Class C. It happened in two years, but it was in

reality happening all the time. The whole existence of the house is a struggle against precisely such a degeneration. Now Hegel says, and this is the first (broad) statement of *his* particular Hegelian method, he says: I who know this, when I look at the house, I must say— this house is, but at the same time it is *not*, or to be more precise, it is and it is not what it is, it is also something else. You find it in the books as A is not equal to A. That formula is the most misleading formula that could be. Any fool can agree with it, and any fool can disagree. Simply because by itself it proves nothing. You have to take *the whole* of the Hegelian argument or you had better leave it alone.

For Hegel, having established the uncertain character of Identity, moves on at once to Difference. And here he is equally bold but a little easier to follow. He says that if identity implies difference, then equally difference implies identity. I do not compare a camel to a French dictionary. Those are merely things which are unlike; there is no “difference” between them. Sure they are “different”, but that is a vulgar difference, as vulgar in its way as the identity that house is house. I can seriously compare the differences of two books, two novels, two novels of the same period, two novels of the same author. Difference, difference worth talking about, can only exist on the basis of some identity. And identity conversely can only exist on the basis of difference, this house is and is not that house. And this house today is not this house tomorrow or in two years’ time.

In fact Hegel says at the moment you think, whether you know it or not, you negate the existent. “This house is worth \$5,000” means it was worth more and that tomorrow it will be worth only \$4000, or if the inflation goes on, \$10,000, Negroes and all. If I am saying that this house is worth \$5,000, was always worth \$5,000 and will always be worth \$5,000, for ever and ever, I am saying nothing, at least I am not seriously thinking. Thought has significance only when the house has relation to other houses which do not possess this priceless attribute of constantly maintaining the price.

Identity means difference. Difference means identity. And now with a leap we can get into it. Hegel says that this principle becomes important, in fact decisive, when you watch, make a philosophical cognition, about a single object. Within the identity of an object, you have to *establish the specific difference*, and within its specific difference, you have to establish the identity. If you have established the specific difference, the difference which belongs to *the object*, which distinguishes it from all other objects and *their* differences, then you have *the Other of the object*. The other is the difference that matters, the essential difference. But as it is special (essential) difference to no other object, then Other is therefore identical with *its* object. To find *that* out is to find out what makes the object move. I look at bourgeois society and I see capital, but labour is its other. In capital is essential difference, but both capital and labour are one identity.

I think myself that all this is thrilling. Let us now take this principle a little further, letting Hegel himself do most of the talking, if even I do not always use quotes. He says that this question of essential difference within every identity is the indispensable necessity for philosophic cognition. Later he will tell us when you say father, you have in mind son. Son is interpenetrated with father. Father has no meaning except in relation to son. Above has no meaning except in relation to below. If I did *not* mean father in relation to son I would not say father, I would say: man or baseball-player or something, but then I am looking at another object or objects. So that simple, abstract identity is a fiction, a deadly trap for *thinkers*.

It is of the greatest importance to recognise this quality of the Determinations of Reflection which have been considered here, that their truth consists only in their relation to each other, and therefore in the fact that each contains the other in its own concept. This must be understood and remembered, for without this understanding not a step can really be taken in philosophy.⁶²

That is how house is not merely house. House is essentially a protection against Nature. So that identical with house is its Other, destruction by Nature. House can be a fort containing soldiers. So identical with house in that connection is its destruction by artillery, etc. House can be also a source of income. So that identical with it is decline in rent. Everything has its own specific complex of relations, and the something has different complexes of relations which continue to give it a specific Other, in other words, control its movement. That is a very important aspect of dialectic. And as Hegel loves to say, dialectic is not practised only by philosophers. The real-estate merchant, the architect, all these people know the particular Other of *their* house very well. It is always in their concept. True the dialectic of the house is as a rule on a very low level, except in case of Florida hurricanes, fire, or runaway inflation. But that Hegel knows too. And he knows too that where you examine great social and intellectual forms in society, then you have got to remember that every object contains its Other in its own concept and every determination of thought has its other in its concept too. Labour always has capital in its concept. That is why labour in 1864 had the capital of 1864 in its concept, labour in 1948 has the capital of 1948 in its concept. Menshevism had Leninism in its concept, and Leninism had Stalinism in its concept. How Stalinism? Because as long as the new organism, socialism, had not been achieved, the revolutionary determination, Leninism, would be attacked by the reflection within it of the fundamental enemy of the proletariat, capital, and state capital within the labour movement is precisely Stalinism, as Menshevism was monopoly capital (in its stage of super-profits from imperialism) within the labour movement. You don't know this? You cannot move a foot. It is worse. You can move but in the wrong direction.

Their truth consists only in their relation to each other. Each contains the other in its own concept. *Know this*. Read it in the two *Logics*. Reflect on it. For if you don't, you cannot *think*. Their truth consists only in their relation to each other. The truth of the labour movement consists only in its relation to capital. How we have sweated to show that the truth of the First International can only be grasped in relation to the specific capital of the day, that the Second International had a similar relation, that the truth of the Third International, in relation to the Fourth International, must be the same. Understand it and *remember* it. Remember it. Remember that Menshevism as a political tendency in the labour movement had its precise opposite, Leninism. That is the history of the Second International, of the Second International and no other. When Menshevism reached its peak it perished and Leninism took its place. That is the way it went, and it could *move* no other way. The Labour movement could move from the revolutionary ideas of 1889 to 1917 only by way of an opposition, a transition through the growth of Menshevism, and by overcoming it. (We know but we have to repeat that these represented objective forces. But for the time being, let us concentrate on the process of thought.) I don't know if you have it. A determination of reflection is identity and difference. And the difference, the Other, emerges, becomes strong, and the Identity has to overcome it, for identity is the beginning of Essence, the movement forward.

The history of the Third International is the history of the supersession of Leninism by Stalinism. Hold the movement tight. You see what was show is now more than show. It is Other which forms the heartbreaking mountain that Identity has to create and climb before it can reach the height to re-establish itself as Identity once more on a higher plane. Thus the reflections of determination must be viewed. Do not give them a free, independent life of their own. They will murder you. Look into them. See their Other, and see if when something serious appears it is not Other which is coming out. Then you know it, you can trace it, you know why it is there, and you can mobilise forces to overcome it. But if you do not see it as Difference in identity, cruel, murderous, but (given the objective forces) necessary *transition*, then you rush off into fantastic explanations such as "tools of the Kremlin" or the incapacity of the workers to understand politics and such like. Once more. That which ultimately becomes the obstacle over which you must climb is an Other which was inside it, identical with it and yet essential difference.

If the Fourth International is to supersede Stalinism then it must "contain" Stalinism in its concept of itself. It begins from all the things that Stalinism took over from Leninism and kept (objective forces bring out Other—different objective forces would bring out a different Other). The moment you think, or allow it to lurk in your mind that the workers are backward or deceived, you repudiate two or three decades of history and your concept contains as its opposite, Menshevism. You then fight a ghost. The British workers, the American workers are not Menshevik, neither are the workers in Norway and

Sweden. A poll taken a few months ago in all the European countries showed that over sixty per cent of the populations were ready to abolish customs duties, integrate economies, etc. What was vanguardism in Lenin's day is now an essential part of the whole populations. The Other of Menshevism was Leninism. The Other of Stalinism is an international socialist economic order, embracing from the start whole continents. Their truth consists only in relation to each other. Each contains the other in its own concept. It goes forward by overcoming this specific opposite. We have not laboured in vain. We have now (I hope) grasped without knowing what Hegel means by his great principle of contradiction.

Contradiction

The most important pages in the Doctrine of Essence I have found to be Observation 3 of the larger *Logic*⁶³. I think when we have finished with this the hump will be behind us, though much will remain to be done.

Hegel in his tantalising way begins by talking calmly about Identity, Variety and Opposition, which he calls the primary determinations of Reflection. I preferred to talk about Identity Difference and Contradiction. Go look them up yourself if you want to. Then he says that contradiction is the root of all movement and life and only through it anything moves and has impulse and activity. Everybody, every Marxist, knows those statements.

Then Hegel does something very characteristic. He says that in regard to the assertion of some people that contradiction does not exist, "we may disregard this statement". Just leave it. First of all he is, blessed man, not a politician. In politics you cannot disregard opponents. Secondly he cannot *begin* by proving such a statement. To ask him to do this is, he considers, unscientific. The proof is all that he will say and the conclusions that he will reach. If you don't like it go your way. Then after a lot of the same panegyric to contradiction, he ends:

Speculative thought consists only in this, that thought holds fast Contradiction, and, in Contradiction, itself, and not in that it allows itself to be dominated by it—as happens to imagination—or suffers its determinations to be resolved into other, or into Nothing.⁶⁴

You have not got "quite *simple* insight" into what this means, I am quite sure when you do you understand dialectic. Until you have that simple insight you do not understand it. To get that simple insight is going to be a job. Let us get down to it.

You remember that each contains the other in its own concept. I talked about

organisation and spontaneity, party and mass, politics and economics. To say that each of these concepts must contain the other is to make a profound but general statement. Much work has been done in Bolshevism to show that politics contains economics in its concept. *No work*, absolutely none, has been done on the others, except for some marvellous beginnings by Lenin. (The subjects of organisation and spontaneity, party and mass, were not *urgent* in Marx's day.)

As I said: to say that the truth of party consists in its relation with mass, the truth of organisation consists in its relation to spontaneity, is to say an abstract truth, but still important truth, a beginning. The one concept has life and movement *because of the opposition of the other*. It moves because of the other, because the *other* moves. It cannot move otherwise. And thought must know this and *hold it*. Look at Hegel's actual procedure in the *Logic*.

We begin with Identity. That became difference. He has now carried it to contradiction. *Each is carried to its limit and so becomes a point of transition for its opposite*. That is how quality becomes quantity. That is how quantity became measure.

That, then, is what Hegel is getting at by his treatment of identity, Difference, Contradiction, Variety, Opposition and his statement that contradiction is the source of all movement. When you observe what is an apparent identity, know that within it the contradictions exist, the essential differences. How will you know? In that annoying section in the smaller *Logic* dealing with Identity he uses a superb phrase, "Identity is the ideality of Being". The difference is first in your head, the Idea. (I asked you, remember, not to forget this, but to put it aside.) What happens in your head when you look at something can never be a simple reflection, an ordinary identity with it. You know where it is going, what it is aiming at. It has its being, the being is concrete, but its essence is that, because of its Other, it will move in a certain direction and your Idea tells you how to search for the Contradiction. Without that you cannot think. Look at what passes in the Marxist movement today as analysis of organisation.

Trotsky, we repeat, having failed for years to understand Lenin on "organisation", in 1917 was converted; and this is what is true, forthwith converted it into a fetish, i.e. a persistent Understanding. For that is what fetishism is. (The Stalinists did the same.) Lenin's "principles of organisation" are today on all lips. They have become a complete abstraction, Understanding. That you can think of organisation only in relation to its opposite, spontaneity, this nobody, *not a single soul*, ever says a word about. I shall take this up concretely before long, but for the time being let us listen to Hegel and understand *him*.

He tells us first the way Imagination thinks and by Imagination (we had it a few minutes ago) Hegel means the kind of thought that deals only with what is familiar. Note what he calls it— Imagination. At first sight it seems incongruous. But I think he wants to contrast it with scientific method, analysis. In any case:

Thus although imagination everywhere has Contradiction for content, it never becomes aware of it, it remains an external reflection, which passes from Likeness to Unlikeness ... It keeps these two determinations external to each other, and has in mind only these, not their transition, which is the essential matter and contains the Contradiction.⁶⁵

Note their transition. That is the essential matter. The transition shows the contradiction. Remember the growth of Bernsteinism within the revolutionary Second International in contradiction to the whole essential aim and purpose of the organisation; and after this growth the break of 1914-21, the point of the transition, when the revolutionary proletariat overcomes this and reasserts its essential purpose on a higher plane.

You nod your head and say: yes, yes, OK. I have it, I have it. Baloney. You will be a little more chastened, you will be much more chastened later, but you will be a little chastened now when you reflect that Lenin never saw this, *until after*, and Trotsky it can truly be said never saw it—up to 1923 at least he was singing the same old tune. So a little modesty please while we go on.

Imagination, in so far as it is revolutionary, sees Stalinism here, and “democratic socialism” over there; and never sees them, their identity or their unity as opposites. It does not see that the labour movement, being what it is in essence, the bureaucratic, criminal, organisational domination of Stalinism, will form inevitably *the point of transition* for another stage higher. It sees the degrading organisation and in despair (or hope) scans the horizon looking for salvation. The Hegelian dialectic keeps its eyes glued on the Stalinist organisation for it knows that the Other of it is there. Now see Hegel’s chief enemy Understanding make its bow:

On the other hand intelligent reflection, if we may mention this here, consists in the understanding and enunciating of Contradiction. It does not express the concept of things and their relations and has only determinations of imagination for material and content; but still it relates them, and the relation contains their contradiction, allowing their concept to show through the contradiction.⁶⁶

Understanding is the same as intelligent reflection. Understanding cannot, does not express the concept of things and their relations. Its determinations are what is familiar to it, not what is familiar in general but what is familiar to it, what once it worked out. It operates with bureaucracies which are unalterably tied to private property, and reformist internationals which always in crisis defend private property and the national state, *things familiar to it*. But Understanding relates these determinations—it thinks, it has perspectives. It says, “this is what it is, and this is what it ought to be.” You are able to glimpse the genuine concept. It shows through the contradiction. It is possible to have a more just, a more precise appraisal of the nature of Trotsky’s writings? And now to see what they *are*, by seeing still more clearly what they are *not*. Let us see how the true Dialectic, Thinking Reason, handles these things. This is a clause by clause section. I hope you get it the first time. We worked hard enough.

Thinking Reason, on the other hand, sharpens (so to speak) the blunt difference of Variety, the mere manifold of imagination, into essential difference, that is, Opposition.

Magnificent. MAG-nificent. Imagination sees a lot of various things, and sees them as Like and Unlike, a manifold variety. Reflection, Understanding, relates them and shows how they contradict each other. See how Stalinism contradicts a true revolutionary organisation. But Reason, Reason, catches hold of the variety and seeks out the Opposition, the Contradiction, *and drives them together*, ties them together, makes one *the Other* of the other. Then things happen.

The manifold entities acquire activity and liveliness in relation to one another only when driven on the sharp point of Contradiction.

That is it. When they are both jammed together, locked together, each in the other, *that* is the guarantee of their movement. When you concentrate all attention on the contradiction between Stalinist bureaucratism and the necessity of the proletariat for free creative activity, then all the phenomena begin to *move*. They do this only when the contradiction is at its sharpest. Hegel means that we can see the movement, only when we have clarified the contradiction—“thence they draw negativity”.

Quite so. The negativity of the free creative activity of the proletariat can only come completely into play when it is in contradiction with a concrete obstacle, something which, to release its own nature, it must overcome. It is the

unbearable nature of the contradiction that creates negativity, “which is the inherent pulsation of self-movement and liveliness”.

Thus it is not a blemish, a fault, a deficiency in a thing if a Contradiction is to be found in it. That is its life.

On the contrary, every determination, every concrete, every concept is essentially a union of distinguished and distinguishable moments, which pass over through determinate and essential difference into contradictory moments.⁶⁷

I wonder if you have got the extreme, the unparalleled boldness of that statement. I can well imagine so many of the people we know saying, “Hegel, there is something in what you say. But as *usual* you *exaggerate*.” *Every* determination. *Every* concrete. *Every* concept. That is his way of saying everything has these moments, these oppositions; one of them is the opposite of what is the real, the essential nature of the organism. By its struggle against this the organism finds more of its real, its genuine nature. Writers on American political economy, writers on American history, students of Greek drama, writers on the development of unions, all of you, get this into your bones. It is not simple. Strive to see it, to see it “simply”, as Hegel said in the Introduction. If there is no sharp contradiction, then there is no movement to speak of and there is stagnation, a compromise. That is the only reason why there is compromise and stagnation—because the contradiction is not sharp enough.

The paragraph isn’t concluded yet, but I propose to stay here for a while. First of all, listen to Hegel again, in the smaller *Logic*. Just as he approaches the climax of his work, his exposition of the Absolute Idea.

In the course of its process the Idea creates that illusion, by setting an antithesis to confront it; and its action consists in getting rid of the illusion which it has created. Only out of this error does the truth arise. In this fact lies the reconciliation with error and with finitude. Error or other-being, when superseded, is still a necessary dynamic element of truth: for truth can only be where it makes itself its own result.⁶⁸

If you had to write this, you would know the bowed admiration with which I read phrases like “necessary dynamic element of truth” to describe error; and the majesty, the completeness of the phrase “truth can only be where it makes itself its own result”. The proletariat itself will smash Stalinism to pieces. This

experience will teach it its final lesson, that the future lies in itself, and not in anything which claims to represent it or direct it.

This is the thing that people glibly write as thesis, antithesis and synthesis. Who ever understood that? Maybe a lot of other people understood it well and I was just dumb. But it took me a long, long time to see it, to get it in my bones, to get “simple insight” into it everywhere, in everything. What am I saying? The thing constantly evades me, but I chase it. A few things of great importance can be said at once, one general, and one particular.

By this doctrine, Hegel gets rid of that tendency to ignore reality or to be overwhelmed by it, which is always lurking around to hold our movement by the throat. He had the utmost contempt for people who tried to brush away the harsh, the cruel, the bitter concrete, the *apparently* unadulterated evil. This is the way, and the only way that truth and the good come. Thus he could say that the real was rational. However evil reality might be, it had its place, its function in the scheme of development.

The great idealist, the man of World-Spirit, etc., did *not* depend on World-Spirit concretely to teach people anything. Therefore he was the last man to expect people to be inspired, to see the light, to “recognise” that “we” were right all the time, or worst of all to be “educated” by a few gifted people. In fact he believed that Spirit, conscious knowledge, was only the province of a few philosophers. As far as great masses or classes of people learnt anything, they learnt it concretely in struggle against some concrete thing. Hegel’s doctrine was reactionary but *that* isn’t what concerns us here. What does concern us is this. He would have laughed to scorn the idea that any party would *teach* the masses free creative activity. He would have said instead: they will find themselves inevitably up against such a system of oppression, bureaucracy, manipulation and corruption within their own arena, their own existence, that they will have to overcome it to live, and free creative activity can only come into existence when it is faced with something that only free activity and free activity alone can overcome. That is the point of transition to a higher stage of existence. There is no other. The Stalinist bureaucracies thus become a stage of development. Free creative activity becomes immeasurably more concrete in our heads. Our notion of socialism changes and we see the harsh reality differently.

And finally, note that the *Logic* itself moves by just this method of opposition, transition, timeliness. His analysis of identity, variety, opposition, ground, actuality, etc., particularly in the Doctrine of Essence, always represents, as he tells us, pairs of correlatives. One of them becomes overwhelming, it threatens to disrupt the whole process, the other overcomes it, and we find ourselves further on. That is how identity splits into difference; difference appears just as variety, but variety, variety, variety all over the place makes no sense; the

manifold variety either disintegrates into craziness (and this happens; it means only that the object as such comes to an end) or this manifold variety crystallises into opposition. And so on. I think we got some place. Back now to the rest of the page. I attach great methodological importance to this page. Among other reasons I have it on my conscience for the way I am jumping from place to place and the still bigger jumps I am going to make. (Hegel would not be too angry. He would say: This impertinence of James, this undoubted evil is a necessary point of transition to some people so that they will read the whole book.) The thirty pages of Ground which I shall probably skip are on my conscience. But this page happens to say a great deal which will cover Ground (I hope). So here goes. I think I shall write freely and then quote lengthily.

Every concept there has these opposing movements. One becomes objectionable, evil, and this forms the bridge, the transition, for the real nature of the concept, to show itself. But when this overcoming does take place, what happens? The new thing is a resolved contradiction. It is, isn't it? Bernsteinism has been overcome. That contradiction is resolved. But inasmuch as the complete nature of the organism has not been revealed, i.e. socialism has not been achieved as yet, Leninism contains a new contradiction. Now this thing (forgive me, philosophical friends—for Christ's sake, I need no forgiveness, I have just seen that Hegel himself calls it "thing") ... now this *thing* that is always producing contradictions, resolving them, and then finding new contradictions, this is *the subject or the concept*. It is not yet the complete, the concrete Absolute, i.e. the proletariat, self-conscious, self-acting, beginning the real history of humanity. The Russian workers were not that in 1917. It is therefore finite, as yet limited. Therefore contradictory. It still has negation before it. The finite, limited multiplicity, the manifold of which it consists, has a certain identity, a unity. But it constitutes a variety, and this variety can be seen to form itself into an opposition; we have a contradiction. But at any rate it is unified once more ready for the business of further splitting up and further negation. (You remember the last extract from the *Phenomenology*?) These stages of unification of resolved contradiction when Essence prepares for negation show us what is the real nature of the thing—its Ground. The fact that it keeps on finding higher and richer Grounds, that is its Essence. Whenever it sets up a good strong *concrete* stage of resolved contradiction we can see what is its Ground.

On the contrary, every determination, every concrete, every concept is essentially a union of distinguished and distinguishable moments, which pass over through determinate and essential difference into contradictory moments.

It is true that this contradictory concretion resolves itself into nothing—it

passes back into its negative unity. Now the thing, the subject, or the concept is itself just this negative unity: it is contradictory in itself, but also it is resolved Contradiction; it is the Ground which contains and supports its determinations. The thing, subject, or concept, as intro-refracted in its sphere, is its resolved Contradiction; but its whole sphere again is determinate and various; it is therefore finite, and this means contradictory. Itself it is not the resolution of this higher Contradiction; but it has a higher sphere for its negative unity or Ground. Accordingly, finite things in the indifferent multiplicity are simply this fact, that, contradictory in themselves, they are intro-refracted and pass back into their Ground.⁶⁹

Here comes now a superb piece of analysis, the maestro at his best. I shall again refrain from clause-by-clause analysis, difficult as it is. I shall interpret freely and you will have the passage. Matthew Arnold in a famous piece of criticism says that you should know certain passages in poetry by heart and let them act as a test and touchstone of other poetry. The method has its dangers, but on the whole it is good. With the *Logic* it is even more so. You must have some passages that you will read and re-read. They are more than a test. They are a handrail. With the more intricate passages, being busy with other things, I forget what I know. I patiently have to re-educate myself. These long quotations, in a context, with examples of familiar material serve this purpose too. You begin to understand and to use the *Logic* when you read these and begin to dig with them into material of your own.

Ground: the Proof of the Absolute

We have been (continues Hegel) inferring the necessity of an essential, continuous, infinite movement from watching and analysing a fixed, limited series of determinations. We shall have to examine this procedure later. But we must remember that we do not make this inference because the being, the determination, persists, becomes a Ground, breaks up, becomes another Ground, being much the same all the time. Not at all. It is because the limited, finite, determination constantly collapses and transcends itself that we can infer continuous motion.

Let us stop here a minute. It is not one International that tries a certain form, and when this fails, tries another form, and when this fails, tries another form (not the same people of course, but the same organisation). No. We could not draw any conclusions from that. The First International is one entity. It collapses. A new one is formed, and this shows us the Ground of these formations. It has the same aim and purpose as the first, though now enriched, developed, concretised. That collapses. A new one is formed. Thus whatever form it may accidentally take (contingency) we can see that it posits something fundamental to it, i.e. shows that this something will appear in the course of

negation of the finite.

In ordinary thinking the Form, the constantly appearing Internationals, seem to be the Ground of our idea of a fully developed, concrete, international socialism some day. The Absolute Idea exists because the finite concretions keep appearing. No, says Hegel (and he is right as I shall demonstrate in a moment). The Absolute conception exists precisely because the finite Internationals are always collapsing. The first commonsense thinking says: the continued appearance of Internationals shows that there is an Absolute. The Hegelian dialectic says: the fact that all these Internationals lack so much, struggle and collapse, this is the proof of the existence of an absolute. We do not *add* the different ones and come to a conclusion. No. As we watch them striving, failing but always incorporating, we recognise that they are expressing a movement to something prior to their contingent appearance.

I have a suspicion that I have vulgarised this somewhat: you will read for yourself. Hegel is dealing here with a strictly philosophical problem and what I have written is horatory. I don't mind really because he is going to come back to this and by the time he is finished with it, all our opponents will shrink from argument. I feel confident that the truth of the philosophical problem posed is contained in my vulgarisation, and that Hegel has this at the back of his head. You cannot prove inevitability or certainty *merely* from repetition of the concrete.

You cannot *prove* inevitability or certainty from a constant series of empirical facts, however often repeated. That the sun has risen every day for a million years is no *proof* that it will rise tomorrow. For absolute certainty you must have a philosophical conception, which has *its own* unshakeable basis. Hegel sought logical tightness in the World-Spirit. Marx found it in his philosophical concept of the nature of man-activity. I take Hegel to be saying here that Essence is a movement and we can be sure it is seeking an Absolute because every form is finite, seeking something further. But if your proof of the Absolute is the merely finite appearance, then every limitation, every collapse that is not an immediate and obvious resolution of contradiction into Ground is a terrible blow. But to jump a little, if you have Absolute in your head, for this is what it amounts to, then the

finitude, limitations, etc., become stages of advance, and above all advance in thought. It is obvious that involved here is the inevitability of socialism. We have seen this weakness which Hegel is warning against in the last few years so near home and in such high places that we can spend a little more time on this.

Hegel knew that you had to have a certainty that did not depend upon limited fixed determinations and categories. It had to depend on something else, and this, in the last analysis, is what drove him to World-Spirit.

Elsewhere⁷⁰ we have treated the inevitability of socialism as a necessity of logical thinking in dialectical terms. But it is wise to recall here that this necessity of having some ultimate goal between your present stage as the twin poles between which your thoughts must move, this also is the product of experience. Philosophers and great men of action have always thought in that manner. Few things are more amusing than the passage from Corinthians, I.15, which is read at Episcopalian burial services. St Paul's "inevitability of socialism" was that the dead rise again. It seems that some tired radicals in Corinth had sneered at the comrades there, asking them: You believe in the resurrection of the dead? How are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come? Paul unloosed all his forces and it is a tour de force of gorgeous rhetoric, sophistry and passionate conviction. He said point-blank: Let *this* go and everything else goes.

The Puritans were the same. *It was ordained*, they said. Same with the philosophers of the eighteenth century. Just get rid of the reaction and the reason inherent in all things will take over. It is the merit, not the weakness of Hegel, that he saw the necessity of giving this a solid logical foundation. The empiricists call it teleology, religion and all sorts of abusive names. I have dealt with them in *Dialectical Materialism and the Fate of Humanity*, and shown the contradictions in which they find themselves.

Here is the final extract.

The nature of the true inference of an absolutely necessary Essence from a finite and contingent entity will be considered below. Such an essence is not inferred from the finite and contingent entity as from a Being which both is and remains Ground, but, as is also implied immediately in contingency, this absolute necessity is inferred from a merely collapsing and self-contradicting Being; or rather it is demonstrated that contingent Being passes automatically back into its Ground, where it transcends itself—and, further, in this retrogression it posits Ground in such a manner only that it makes itself into the posited element. In an ordinary inference the Being of the finite appears as the Ground of the absolute: the absolute is because the finite *is*. The truth, however, is that the absolute is just because the finite is self-contradictory opposition—just because it is *not*. In the former meaning an inference runs thus: The Being of the finite is the Being of the absolute;—but in the latter: The Not-being of the finite is the Being of the absolute.⁷¹

I hope you get it. I think it is a beautiful example of Hegel's method. This is all we can do: give some idea of what Ground is and why it is necessary. Essence is a movement. It is the analysis of Ground which tells us exactly what that movement is: Our abstract little spirit who didn't know what he was by his futile becomings was by degrees establishing some Ground. If you want more

Review and Leninist Interlude

I feel guilty as hell. We are now only at p. 80 of *Essence*. I pass by *Ground* looking firmly at the other side. *Substance*, *Necessity*, *Reciprocity*, all of them I am going to pass by. I shall make some strictly *ad hoc* notes on *Appearance* and *Actuality*, and then over to *Notion*. But let us review a little and then look for some help. We are dealing with thought. We learnt to look at the quality of a thing and its dialectical movement into something else. We then saw that when we looked at it, what we saw was not a photograph, an identity. No, we saw difference within identity and identity within difference. We saw too that in our heads was an *Idea* which enabled us to distinguish the specific differences. We saw the importance of *Contradiction*, the fundamental relation of good and evil, truth and error, the process of transition. The object does not move into something else; it shows the *Other* contained in it. We are learning how to examine an object and how to examine thoughts about an object. Is *Ground* the *next* transition after *Contradiction*? Does *Appearance* arise inevitably out of *Existence*? I doubt if Hegel would maintain all that in detail. These determinations in *Essence* are, it must be remembered, *Determinations of Reflection*. They are creations of thought, but creations which reflect the object, enable us to take it apart and put it together again, and first of all in our heads. We are going to the concept of *Notion*—the notion of the thing. We worry it as a dog worries a bone. That is what *Essence* teaches.

But before we take up the concepts of *Appearance* and *Actuality* we would do well to see what a remarkable intelligence, trained in the same sphere as we have been trained, made of the *Logic*, and examine his thinking with this in view. We need a little rest. *Essence* is the hardest part of the *Logic*, says Hegel, and we still have a long way to go.

Lenin in 1914 found himself in Zurich, with the world that he had known and his categories breaking to pieces. He did not get excited and start to make the revolution by himself. He had a *policy* and he fought for it, but he recognised that everything was in a melting pot. He wrote above all *Imperialism* and *State and Revolution*. He studied the *Phenomenology of Mind*, and he worked at Hegelian *Logic*. He made notes on the *Logic*. We have extracts and comments. Sidney Hook once told me that there wasn't much to them. Quite right. For him, there wasn't much. The Marxist movement swears by... Plekhanov. I remember on my journeys between Missouri and New York stopping at Washington and Rae*, calling out an at-sight translation from Lenin's Russian notes and my scribbling them down. I still have the notebook. That they are not published means one thing—contempt for the masses. Yes, precisely. They don't need it, they are not up to it. And therefore the party does not need it.

Only when you have respect for the masses do you have respect for the party. There is nothing in these notes for Hook the academician. There is plenty for us in seeing what struck the mind of the great revolutionary as he read, with the years of Russian Bolshevism stored up in his mind and the perspective of world revolution before him. There is space for only a few things. But they stand out.⁷³

Raya Dunayevskaya, Trotsky's former secretary.

In reading on Quality in the Doctrine of Being, Lenin writes in very large writing:

LEAP
LEAP
LEAP
LEAP

This obviously hit him hard. He wanted it stuck down in his head, to remember it, always. He makes a note on it as follows:

At the basis of the concept of gradualness of emergence lies the idea that the emerging is already sensuously or really in existence, only on account of its smallness not yet perceptible and likewise with the concept of the gradualness of disappearance.

Let us look up the extract itself:

The gradualness of arising is based upon the ideas that that which arises is already, sensibly or otherwise, actually there, and is imperceptible only on account of its smallness; and the gradualness of vanishing on the idea that Not-being or the Other which is assuming its place equally is there, only is not yet noticeable; there, not in the sense that the Other is contained in the Other which is there in itself, but that it is there as Determinate Being, only unnoticeable. This altogether cancels arising and passing away: or the In-itself, that inner somewhat in which something is before it attains Determinate Being, is transmuted into a smallness of external Determinate Being and the essential or conceptual distinction into a difference external and merely magnitudinal. The procedure which makes arising and passing away conceivable from the gradualness of change is boring in the manner peculiar to tautology; that which arises or passes away is prepared beforehand, and the change is turned into the mere changing of an external distinction; and now it is indeed a mere tautology. The difficulty for such Understanding which attempts to conceive consists in the qualitative transition of something into its Other in general and into its opposite; Understanding prefers to fancy identity and change to be of

that indifferent and external kind which applies to the quantitative.⁷⁴

Understanding once more gets the blows. This is a passage of great importance and Lenin has summarised it perfectly with his LEAP LEAP LEAP LEAP. The new thing LEAPS out. You do not look and see it small and growing larger. It is there, but it exists first in thought. Thought knows it is the object. You haven't to see it (though if you know it is there you can see signs and point them out). Hegel is bored to tears at people who keep looking for external signs and "the mere magnitudinal" as proof. Lenin did not fasten on this for nothing. He said: "Turn the Imperialist War into Civil War." How many sincere opponents of imperialism recoiled in horror. "Too rash, too crude, not now." (Trotsky was among them). Lenin would not budge. The socialist movement against imperialism would establish itself on the concrete transition—the opposition to the monstrous evil of the war. He didn't have to wait to see anything. That was there. It would LEAP up.

I was particularly struck by this in Lenin. Hegel is very irritating. He sticks to *method*. He does not shout. But every single one of his transitions involves a leap. He talks very quietly about impulse, etc. But you can go on reading for a long time and not get the true significance of the leap. I did not emphasise it. He held on to it.

On the Doctrine of Essence, Lenin fastens on to *precisely the same thing*. Look at this remarkable note on Observation 3.

Movement and "self-movement" (NB this. An independent spontaneous, *internally necessary* movement), "alteration", "movement and life", "principle of every self-movement", "impulse", (drive) to "movement" and to "activity"—opposite of "dead being"—who would believe that this is the core of "Hegelianism", of abstract and abstruse (difficult, absurd?) Hegelianism. We must uncover this core, grasp it, "save" unveil, purify it—which Marx and Engels have also accomplished.⁷⁵

That is something *vital*. Self-movement. Spontaneous activity. We shall meet them again. You wait. This is what we must hold on to, grasp, "unveil, purify". We can say that we have done some. This movement, activity, spontaneous, internally necessary. The man of organisation knew what moved the world, especially the social world. Hegel could write about thoughts for decades, but this was the drive, and it made LEAPS (four of them at once).

On Observation 3 see notes among other things:

NB 1. The usual perception comprehends the difference and the contradiction but not the transition from one to the other, which however, is the most important.

We shall come back to Lenin again. But let us sit and write in large print on our notes: LEAP, SPONTANEOUS ACTIVITY, SELF-MOVEMENT, etc. etc. Where he wrote it four times, we should write it forty-four. The past point from Lenin is important not only in itself but for us, *in this study*. And it comes right in here.

These last notes of Lenin that we must take up will be rather lengthy. That is because they have tremendous value for us, (a) in themselves as a review of the past, (b) as teaching the interconnectedness of the various parts of the *Logic* and the underlying unity of the method at all stages, (c) illuminate the closing parts of the Doctrine of Essence yet to come, (d) show us the Hegelian method of thought and action of Lenin: i.e. of a revolutionary} and (e) prepare us for the last historical stage of this essay: Lenin's own work, for which and from which alone we can jump off and fly for ourselves.

That is a mouthful but every bit of it is juicy. And I hope no one is impatient. Let us see where we are. We did the Doctrine of Essence up to Ground. We discussed the question of how you arrive at Inevitability, the Absolute. We promised to take up only Appearance and Actuality as two further stages of the Notion. We then went into a Leninist interlude and review. We saw Lenin's emphasis on the LEAP (four times); and on constant movement, spontaneous internally necessary self-activity . We noted that the whole *Logic* itself, the continuous transitions from this Ground to that Ground, to the other Ground to Complete Ground, was just this continuous self-generating, spontaneous activity, though the activity had a certain order which it was the business of thought to organise in accordance with the laws immanent in it, i.e. the laws of its own development. Good. We are now about to take up a note of Lenin's which opened up a formidable perspective of benefits, both for the past review and future developments. Who now is tired can take a rest, and after a nap, can start off afresh. Let's go.

The note itself is very slight. It arises from Section I of the larger *Logic* on Quality. It says:

The idea of the transformation of the ideal into the real is *profound*; very important for history. But also in the personal life of a man, it is evident that in this there is much truth. Against vulgar materialism. NB: The difference between idea and material is in any case, not unconditional, not extravagant (*überschwenglich*).⁷⁶

That's all. I looked up the section and glanced through it again. It is some hundred pages long. It is in the *Doctrine of Being*, mind you, the *first* section, in fact, the real *beginning* of the *Logic*.

Hegel is grappling with words that he always has in mind, finite and infinite. What is the true infinity? "Finite" is a fixed, limited determination or category. The infinite is not simply something that is *beyond* the finite. That he says is nothing, a bad infinite. (Get your thinking muscles in order. Sit up and take notice). The infinite is *not* something in general that is beyond what we know as actual. It is the fact that what is beyond the finite comes back, and accomplishes a return to the finite and keeps on doing this, that makes it a true infinity. The beyond, the infinite, is not *abstract* or *indeterminate* Being, something we know nothing about, our old monster, Nothing. It, the infinite, the beyond, is self-related Being, because to come into existence at all the infinite is going to have to negate the finite. It is thus a negating force. And whatever negates is something present. If we may here use a *metaphor*: Infinite is the Other of the finite. But Infinite is *not* negation in general. It is the bad infinite which negates the existing and puts nothing in its place. That is vague fancy, caprice, and nonsense (or mere reflection). Socialism is not a vague, rosy-coloured picture of infinite beauty and truth and love, something beyond our miserable life. Socialism, the beyond, is the concrete negation of what we have—Stalinism. The overcoming of Stalinism is the next stage of infinity—and for my part the working class today when it overcomes Stalinism, i.e. the "*capitalising*" of the concept of the proletarian party, that working class, having overcome this, is truly socialistic. For that matter when it overcomes its main enemy, capital, and the brutalities of fascism, inflation, imperialist war, the destructive, the class elements in modern industry, *that* is socialism—the only infinite that there is. But why does the infinite for some people remain a Beyond, a far distant? And then comes a knock-out blow. That is in the last analysis, "based on the fact that the finite as such is held fast as existent." That is the mentality which sees socialism in the far distance and is really chained to the idea that what the workers want is a higher standard of living, "a full dinner-pail", "peace", "security", "full employment". All he has done is to hold fast to the existent, making it tolerable by patching up the holes. That is the next stage of socialism. Shachtman is that *type* complete. The opposition, the socialism that lies in the struggle and overcoming of Stalinism is beyond him. But that does not exhaust the type. At the other end of its scale is Trotsky. He holds fast to another type of existent, the world of 1917. After twenty-one years of the Russian revolution all he could say was: revive the soviets; revise the plan in the interests of the toilers; free the unions. If Shachtman is Imagination, which thinks only with what is familiar, Trotsky is Understanding, which thinks only with what is familiar to *it*. To both, the next stage is *excluded*. Yes, to *both* of them. And precisely because of that, the present eludes them. Thus early, at the beginning, in Quality, in the *Doctrine of Being*, Hegel

was saying, in general, on a very abstract level, what he will be saying on a more developed level in Essence, and on a still higher level in the Doctrine of the Notion.

Here then is the complete extract. The phrase “progress to infinity” is characteristic of those who do not see the real nature of infinity. They see infinity as a straight line. Hegel says it is a series of circles, each circle, however, including and yet excluding the previous circle, thus:

This infinite is the accomplished return upon itself. As such it is self-relation or Being; but not abstract or indeterminate Being, for it is posited as negating negation; and thus it is also Determinate Being, for it contains negation as such, and, therefore, determinateness. It exists, and exists as a Determinate Being, present and before us. It is only the bad infinite which is the beyond, because it is the negation, and nothing more, of the finite posited as real; it is thus abstract and first negation; it is determined as merely negative, and is without the affirmation implicit in Determinate Being; and if held fast as mere negative it is even supposed to be non-existent and beyond reach. But to be thus beyond reach is not its glory but its shame; which, ultimately, is based on the fact that the finite as such is held fast as existent. That which is untrue is beyond reach; and it is evident that such an infinite is the untrue. The image of the “progress to infinity” is the straight line, the infinite still remaining at its two limits and there only where the line is not; now the line is Determinate Being, which passes on to this its contradictory, that is, into the indeterminate. But as true infinity, turned back upon itself, it has for image the circle, the line which has reached itself, closed and wholly present and having neither beginning nor end.⁷⁷

Now having said this he proceeds to say the most astonishing things, for those who think in terms of common sense. He says, for example, that it is not the finite, the fixed limited, concrete, which is real. It is the Infinite which is real. And I trust no one reading this is so dumb as not to be aware that this is the very point we dug into on Ground where we discussed the Absolute in terms of the Being and Not-Being of the finite. Yet that is Volume II, page 70 about, and this is Volume I, page 162. There are some four hundred pages in between. Isn’t this fellow marvellous? And far away in the centre of Volume II he will come back to it again, and end up once more with it in the final section, on methods of inquiry, or the Idea of Cognition. He himself practises the continually enlarging circles.

True infinity thus taken, in general, as Determinate Being opposed affirmatively to abstract negation, is Reality in a higher meaning than is that infinity which before was determined as simple; it has here received concrete

content. It is not the finite which is the real, but the infinite; and thus Reality is further determined as Essence, Notion, Idea, and so forth. It is however, superfluous to repeat these earlier and more abstract categories, such as “Reality”, when the more concrete has been reached, and to employ them for determinations more concrete than these are in themselves. A repetition, such as is made when we say that Essence or the Idea is the Real, has its reason in the fact that, to uncultivated thought, the most abstract categories, such as Being, Determinate Being, Reality, and Finitude, are the most familiar.⁷⁸

I leave that to you, and hurry on to the last passage:

Here there is a more definite reason for recalling the category of reality, for the negation to which it stands in the relation of affirmative is here the negation of negation: it is thus itself opposed to this reality, which is finite Determinate Being. Negation is thus determined as ideality; that which partakes of the ideal nature is the finite as it is found in true infinity, as a determination or content, which though distinct does not exist independently, but only as moment. Ideality has this more concrete meaning, which is not fully expressed by negation of finite Determinate Being.⁷⁹

Yes. The real is only a moment, though fixed, limited, finite, in the Ideal. Don't ignore it. It is “distinct”. But it has no independent existence. Identity now has a more concrete meaning, and it is not sufficient to say that the Infinite, the beyond will negate the finite: socialism will do away with all this in general. No, sir. That only means that you have not done away with all this and cannot see the forces that are doing away with it. But there are some people who do not understand this. Hegel continues:

But with relation to reality and ideality the opposition to finite and infinite is taken in this manner, that the finite is taken as real and the infinite as of ideal nature; and such, indeed, and only such, the Notion is later on taken to be; whereas Determinate Being in general is taken as real.

You may try to change the phrasing to help them. You can't. They “remain fixed in the affirmative Determinate Being of the finite.”

That is the aim of the *Logic*, for the thousandth time: how to keep out of the fixed, limited, finite categories. Hegel is doing just this, in a constantly more concrete manner, page after page. That is all. But what an all! To get out of the clutching hands of fixed categories. It isn't easy. Precisely because we have to get them fixed and precise before we can do anything. We can remain fixed in

them when they are grabbed on to by people who are objectively satisfied to remain there.

Worse still, we can remain fixed in them *when they no longer exist*. The result is complete frustration, and blindness to reality. Within those categories Trotskyism works. Stalinism, however, has found *the objective basis* for those categories as fixed and static, finite and limited forms. (I have been searching for this for weeks and I have it). Stalinism has found the objective basis for the fixed categories of Leninism. Hence it operates on a material basis. The games it played with Trotsky over socialism in a single country were the concretization, the stabilizing of its ideology. For Stalinism, this was a real ideology. For Trotsky it was in essence a fiction without any reality.

Now we can go ahead and select a few sentences which contain the core of Hegel's Ideality.

The proposition that the finite is of ideal nature constitutes Idealism.⁸⁰

You see here the close connection between the ideal and the real. The real is constantly creating an ideal which tomorrow becomes the real and so on.

Hegel curses those people for whom the ideal is in their own heads and their own caprice. How he hates them.

By that which is “of ideal nature” the form of imagination is meant primarily; and this name is given to whatever is in my imagination in general, or in the concept, in the idea, in the fancy, and so forth; so that it comes to be counted equivalent only to fancies—imaginings which are not only distinct from the real, but are supposed in their essence to be not real.⁸¹

Hegel has no use for that. The idea for him is in such close connection with the real that you cannot separate them. A genuine ideal today is the real of tomorrow. And that is the way life, and the logic, move.

So we go back to Lenin's modest but pregnant note about Hegel. The transformation of the ideal into the real is profound, very important for history. You remember in *Dialectical Materialism and the Fate of Humanity* I quoted a section from an old article in the *New International* showing how ideal became real, etc., owing to the aims and objective consolidations and compromises of classes and sections of classes. But this very thing will become in time for us the basis of long overdue theoretical investigation and then concrete practical

politics. We have now (a) reviewed the past, (b) seen the interconnection and underlying unity of the parts of the *Logic*. We promised also to (c) illuminate the closing parts of Essence yet to come—the rest will have to wait. On now to the last parts of the Doctrine of Essence. (After terrible hours of labour, I am feeling pretty good. I think we have got some place, and are on the road to some better places).

Appearance and Actuality

Now, having leapt over Ground, and taken a vacation with Lenin, we find ourselves in Appearance. I want to take up Appearance for a particular reason.

One of our most important pieces of work is the exposure of the analysis of the Stalinist parties as “tools of the Kremlin”. We say that it is true that they are “tools of the Kremlin”. But that, we say, is only the appearance of things. We say that in essence they are a product of labour and capital at this stage, as Menshevism was a product of labour and capital at that stage. We clinch it by saying: if there had been no Russian revolution, no Kremlin, but capitalism had continued to degenerate without being overthrown by socialism, then there would have appeared such a party as Stalinism, preaching revolution, ready to join up across national boundaries with other workers, repudiating private property and national defence, but mortally afraid of the workers and rushing for protection and refuge to a larger imperialism, bureaucratic, corrupt, monolithic, reflecting capitalism in its stage of state capitalism. Our opponents continue with these “tools of the Kremlin”. It is disgusting. Yet, curiously enough, they do not call the present Mensheviks “tools of Washington”. They have Lenin to go by and they at least try to relate these to labour and capital—falsely, but at least they try.

The importance of our analysis is obvious. It enables us to characterise Stalinism as a stage of transition—we are not in the ridiculous position of explaining why these “tools of the Kremlin” for no God-damn reason fasten themselves on the Kremlin. We place the responsibility on capitalism. We paint them objectively and not subjectively.

So much in general. In particular, we rid ourselves of the Russian hangover. “Socialism in a single country” originated from Russia and has never held the slightest interest for the world proletariat—never. I remember the days when we nourished ourselves on the illusion—I said it often—that when the workers *understood* at last that the communist parties were merely agents of Stalin’s foreign policy, they would turn to us. Everybody knows this truth now. They turn to the Stalinists more than ever. The whole method of thinking was wrong. Socialism in a single country did not “produce” communist parties that turned to their own bourgeoisie. That socialism could not be built was as great an abstraction as Trotsky’s theory of the permanent revolution. It was a

continuation of his old struggle with Bolshevism, by this time corrupted under Stalin. All this, the theory of the permanent revolution, the whole debate about socialism in a single country, the masses would turn to us when they understood, etc., all this is the purest subjective thinking with no objective contact with reality. “Tools of the Kremlin” is Appearance, the specific labour organisation of the epoch of state capitalism is Essence. That is only in general. Let us arm ourselves with some dialectical logic.

Essence is a movement. This movement has to appear. Its immediate appearance Hegel calls Existence. Something exists, but it is transitory, unimportant, mere Show, until it persists and becomes Appearance. Appearance is existence which has become “essential”

Essence accordingly is not something beyond or behind appearance, but just because it is the essence which exists—the existence is Appearance (Forth-shining).⁸²

But you have to be careful with appearance. You cannot dismiss it—this is only a mere appearance. Hegel says:

Appearance is in every way a very important grade of the logical idea. It may be said to be the distinction of philosophy from ordinary consciousness that it sees the merely phenomenal character of what the latter supposes to have a self-subsistent being. The significance of appearance, however, must be properly grasped, or mistakes will arise. To say that anything is a mere appearance may be misinterpreted to mean that, as compared with what is merely phenomenal, there is greater truth in the immediate, in that which is. Now in strict fact, the case is precisely the reverse. Appearance is higher than mere Being, a richer category because it holds in combination the two elements of reflection-into-self and reflection-into another: whereas Being (or immediacy) is still mere relationlessness, and apparently rests upon itself alone. Still, to say that anything is only an appearance suggests a real flaw, which consists in this, that Appearance is still divided against itself and without intrinsic stability. Beyond and above mere appearance comes in the first place Actuality, the third grade of Essence, of which we shall afterwards speak. In the history of Modern Philosophy, Kant has the merit of first rehabilitating this distinction between the common and the philosophic modes of thought. He stopped halfway however, when he attached to Appearance a subjective meaning only, and put the abstract essence immovable outside it as the thing-in-itself beyond the reach of our cognition. For it is the very nature of the world of immediate objects to be appearance only. Knowing it to be so, we know at the same time the essence, which, far from staying behind or beyond the appearance, rather manifests its own essentiality by depositing the world to a mere appearance. One can hardly quarrel with the plain man who, in his

desire for totality, cannot acquiesce in the doctrine of subjective idealism, that we are solely concerned with phenomena.⁸³

A good passage. Worth working over. But its importance *for us* is both theoretical and practical. Theoretical because we have just been saying at some length that the real is only a moment of the ideal. Good. But that was in general. Now Hegel is saying that the whole world is Appearance but that Appearance is a manifestation of Essence. And when he warned us that the real was real “distinct”, he now warns us that appearance is no “mere” appearance. It if were, it would be a show (one of the cheap kinds of show, for Hegel, blast him, has many “shows”). The warning means: you must *relate* appearance to Essence.

A salutary warning! “Tools of the Kremlin” is the only way in which Essence could appear in the contemporary world. It was not this appearance by chance. This is the truest value of Hegel. He makes you wrestle with the problems, probe into them, see deeper and more complicated relations (which, however, tend to a greater simplicity), and help you to re-examine the object. A true appearance is one that *must* be that way. Doubtful? Let’s see.

If a bureaucracy is convinced that capitalism as it has known it is hopeless and helpless, if it feels the pressure of the revolutionary masses, if it lives in mortal terror of the mass upheaval which seems to it to mean chaos and the destruction of civilisation, then with its own bourgeoisie offering no perspective, it must turn to another. It must turn to the revolutionary proletariat or to the bourgeoisie. In fundamental crisis there is no other place for it to go. It therefore turns to the opposite major imperialism. It creates an idealised version of its patron, it fastens upon what it thinks will make clear to its followers the necessity of supporting it. It becomes its advocate, it adopts its ideology; in its own defence it becomes defender of its patron.

The proof of this can be seen by observing those who *oppose* the Russian regime. Stalinism has one phrase for *them*: “tools of American imperialism”. In all the satellite countries and in Russia no doubt the opposition which is not able to turn to the revolutionary masses but finds the Russian regime intolerable has fundamentally the same attitude to American “democracy” and “industrial power” that the opposition, the Stalinists in the Western world, have to Russian “planned economy”. Were it not for the merciless totalitarian regime, we should find in all probability the opposition leadership in Russia and certainly in the satellite countries, such as it may be, as bold, as fanatical, for “democracy” as the Stalinists are for “planned economy”.

“Planned economy” seems to be something new and is more in harmony with the present stage of capitalism, but the opposition is as fanatical as the

Stalinists are, and given the opportunity of time, American money, and the freedom the Stalinists have in the democracies, the leaders would create an ideology and a practice which would enable their enemies to call them “tools of the White House” in the same way that the Stalinists are called “tools of the Kremlin”. They could do this very well without advocating the return to private property of heavy industry. It is precisely for this reason that Stalin allows nothing in, not a peep of even a foreign newspaper. *Opposition to the regime which is not revolutionary must seek the ideology of the opposing imperialism.* This is the logical movement. It is, however, as a logical movement always is, modified by all sorts of circumstances. An old, historically powerful country like Britain, with its own deeply-rooted traditions and a powerful and united working class, cannot preach “Americanism” as the Stalinists preach Stalinism. The labour bureaucracy, however, acts in subservience to American imperialism in all important matters. De Gaulle, that powerful trumpeter of French nationalism, has now become a genuine American admirer. But in weaker countries like Rumania, Hungary, etc., the opposition to Stalinism is without this combination. The socialists are for “American democracy”, and combine this with proposals for nationalization .

So that appearance is no mere appearance. It is the only way in which in the present complex of conditions Essence can shine forth. And Hegel means precisely that. Otherwise Appearance is not Appearance. It is show or Existence or some damn thing. But when its quality grows and grows until it settles down into Appearance, then you have something. And as you learn to read the larger *Logic* and his pages upon pages of apparently abstruse and mystifying jargon, you will find him forcing you to see movement, pattern, connection, order, inevitability where formerly you saw nothing or mere chance.

The implications of all this are enormous for thought in relation to the modern world. The idea that the Russian revolution attracted so many fades into the subjectivity that it is. This relation of Appearance and Essence teaches us to see that it is hopelessness in capitalism and hopelessness in the revolution which drove anti-capitalists to the Moscow bureaucracy. They found an objective basis and function and fought off their enemies. That is why the defeat in Germany in 1933 and the coincident degradation of the masses strengthened American imperialism. Each group boasted its own “nationalization” or “democracy”, some combining both, but knowing where the emphasis lay. These were the traps laid for the masses. Trotsky’s arguments on socialism in a single country not only led to false conclusions. It cut him off from any serious possibility of examining what was taking place in Western Europe.

It is impossible to stay here now and examine all the implications. Let us go on with Hegel. He says that after Appearance the next stage is Actuality, and he tells us what Actuality is. When Appearance is no longer the expression of

Essence but assumes an independent existence of its own, and Essence too comes out in its own name and right, then we have Actuality. The veils are torn away, two totalities face each other. Hegel writes: There is no transition.

In actuality this unity is explicitly put, and the two sides of the relation identified. Hence the actual is exempted from transition, and its externality is its energizing. In that energizing it is reflected into itself: its existence is only the manifestation of itself, not of another.⁸⁴

There is now no internal transition, no reflection. Fundamental forces are in conflict *in the open*. In Actuality, essence, the movement to realization, is seen plain. Appearance that was, the way Essence used to shine forth, is now something in its own right. In the organism we have been following, the proletariat, Actuality is as plain as day to a dialectician. The movement of the proletariat, its seeking after the realization of its potentialities is plain, even Shachtman can see it. But the bureaucracies, the organisations, the parties, these no longer express the movement. They have now acquired an independent existence of their own within the totality. The conflict is at its most acute. There is no *transition*. There is due now the total reorganization into something new. As Marcuse remarks in *Reason and Revolution*,⁸⁵ the category of Actuality means merciless struggle.

I have to leave it to you to work out with Hegel how a stage like Actuality expresses itself in Substance, then in Causality where, contrary to Understanding which perpetually sees cause here and effect there, Hegel sees cause as measurable only by effect. This cause is *that* effect. But that effect is another cause. Effect is incited into action by cause. But cause too is incited by effect. You cannot separate them. The opposing units are jammed too tight. From causality, the step is easy to action and reaction, what Hegel calls Reciprocity. It is a more intensive stage of Cause and Effect. Of Reciprocity Engels writes: "What Hegel calls reciprocal action is the organic body, which therefore forms the transition to consciousness, i.e. from necessity to freedom, to the idea: see *Logic* II, Conclusion."⁸⁶

And under the stress of this violent pressure back and forth, for neither can give way, the organism boils over into the Notion. It knows itself for what it is. That stage is not far off for the proletariat.

As you work through Substance, Possibility, Necessity, Contingency, etc., do not handicap yourself by trying to fit *every* paragraph into some phase of the development of the proletariat to socialism. It is not necessary. Hegel examined all the available material of his own day, in all the major spheres of nature and society to abstract this essential blueprint. What we should do is to note what

he says about Actuality and the Idea. He wants you to keep them as close as you kept Appearance and Essence. He warns against making any great separation between Actuality and Idea. They are close. We should remember that today. His comment is easy, colloquial, very different from that in the larger *Logic*. It nevertheless says what he wants to say. Note how the Idea hugs the Actuality—the ideal and the real (you remember our interlude with Lenin?) in the abstract generalities of Being have now become more concentrated in the more developed sphere of Essence.

Actuality and thought (or Idea) are often absurdly opposed. How commonly we hear people saying that, though no objection can be urged against the truth and correctness of a certain thought, there is nothing of the kind to be seen in actuality, or it cannot be actually carried out! People who use such language only prove that they have not properly apprehended the nature either of thought or of actuality. Thought in such a case is, on one hand, the synonym for a subjective conception, plan, intention or the like, just as actuality, on the other, is made synonymous with external and sensible existence. This is all very well in common life, where great laxity is allowed in the categories and the names given to them: and it may of course happen that e.g. the plan, or so-called idea, say of a certain method of taxation, is good and advisable in the abstract, but that nothing of the sort is found in so-called actuality, or could possibly be carried out under the given conditions. But when the abstract understanding gets hold of these categories and exaggerates the distinction they imply into a hard and fast line of contrast, when it tells us that in this actual world we must knock ideas out of our heads, it is necessary energetically to protest against these doctrines, alike in the name of science and of sound reason. For on the one hand Ideas are not confined to our heads merely, nor is the Idea, upon the whole, so feeble as to leave the question of its actualization or non-actualization dependent on our will. The Idea is rather the absolutely active as well as actual. And on the other hand actuality is not so bad and irrational, as purblind or wrong-headed and muddle-brained would-be reformers imagine. So far is actuality, as distinguished from mere appearance, and primarily presenting a unity of inward and outward, from being in contrariety with reason, that it is rather thoroughly reasonable, and everything which is not reasonable must on that very ground cease to be held actual. The same view may be traced in the usages of educated speech, which declines to give the name of real poet or real statesman to a poet or statesman who can do nothing really meritorious or reasonable.⁸⁷

Between us, it is very meritorious and reasonable when Hegel discusses these things in that way. The translators of the larger *Logic* say that at times in that work he seemed to be obscure and mysterious in his language for sheer devilry. But here he is quiet and easy.

This for us is the end of Essence. We have seen it grow from Show, we dug

into its Ground (we didn't dig too deep), we skipped over to Appearance. We saw in Actuality the different elements come out into the open. Henceforth no compromise is possible. War to the end. Another time, you will see the philosophical investigations and method which Hegel used to get this. You will tackle perhaps the fascinating problem of how this philosophical development took place, and how it compares to an intelligent man unphilosophically examining an object and learning more and more *experience*. You will see later how gifted individuals, expressing their own psychosomatic idiosyncrasies proved unable to go further than a certain stage in thought, and how classes, or sections of classes made them their spokesmen. All this is for the future. But now we have, in accordance with our practice, to use Essence, lift ourselves a stage, just one more stage further. I propose to do two things: (1) examine Lenin's work, for until we go through that and make it our own, we cannot go on; (2) after doing that step forward a little, in general, on our own, keeping well within Essence. When you read Cause and Effect in Essence, a very high stage of Essence, you will remember that in the *Logic* Hegel had also expounded on Cause and Effect, in general, stage by stage, step by step. That I have learnt.

ESSENCE IN ACTION

i. Lenin after 1914

We shall begin by facing this disturbing fact: Lenin was completely deceived by the Second International. All attempts to palliate this are lies or nonsense and we can here imitate Hegel and say: ignore all such. You see it is very easy to nod the head and say, "OK. We understand how the determination develops opposition and how through the contradiction the transition is made." I keep warning you. Do not read, nod the head and pass on. You have to *strive*.

Lenin, as so often happens, recognized the thing only after it had happened. But he saw it then. And in one of his articles he attacks Trotsky and Potresov, for not understanding what had happened to the Second International. The whole episode is a perfect example of dialectical method and the dialectical process, past, present, and future, with Essence as its axis.

Trotsky and Potresov had claimed that the Second International succumbed to gradualism. Little by little it had sunk into a routine and vote-getting, dues-collecting organization and so had collapsed into nationalism. Trotsky's remarks on this in *The Bolsheviks and World Peace* are inconceivably bad and even worse is his repetition of them in 1923 in *The New Course*.⁸⁸ Not so Lenin.

Lenin's procedure was entirely different. He set to work, as we know, to find the objective basis for this unexpiated "betrayal". Note please that Marx and

Engels had talked of bourgeoisified workers in England many decades before. Lenin had written about it himself. But only in 1914 had the phenomenon *risen to the status of a full-fledged category*. There it was dominating the European labour movement, and no one had seen it clearly enough to analyse it, i.e. concretize it, give it organic life.

As a marxist he sought what Trotsky never sought for: stalinism, its objective basis in the economy. And he did more. He went over the past and he traced the opportunism. For Trotsky and Potresov he listed country after country where oppositions to the social-democratic leadership had existed. There was no pure gradualism he said. The *oppositions* had *actually* appeared.

He went further. He showed, in a passage we have often quoted, that side by side, or rather in opposition to the corruption of the top layer by super-profits, the class struggle had sharpened, the trusts had become more oppressive, and a great internationalization of the proletariat had taken place, common oppression, dragging in of rural workers into cities, of native populations into industrialization, etc. We have used the passage in more than one place. Thinking Reason was now looking back and *sharpening the contradictions*—the contradiction between the labour aristocracy and the real masses below, between the social-democratic leadership and the (very weak) oppositions. He brought them together, saw their transition and counted upon the LEAP. He was not disappointed. It was hindsight, but his recovery from the blunders of the pre-1914 period was rapid and thorough.

Nor did Lenin stay there. Not at all. In another article, 'one of his finest, he said that this division in the labour movement was now a fact that could not be avoided. Where it had not appeared yet, it was going to appear. And, he declared, as the crisis grows, we must expect that *these reformist parties will grow bigger and bigger before they were overthrown*.

There is some kind of fool, sometimes knave, who would settle down to six months' debate as to whether I mean that Lenin had read the *Logic* and therefore worked out this. His only relief will be masturbation. I am not joining. He will play by himself, with himself. But this I do say. There, after the event, it is true, we have the dialectic method of Essence in pure and brilliant form. But must we always only see this in the past? This whole thesis is aimed at trying to make us see it in the present and use it in the present. It is not simple, my friends. But we can try. In fact we are going to try now, to begin with, in general.

ii. Marxism today

As I say we have interpreted, illustrated, the various stages. But that is not enough. We have to *do* something with this knowledge. Each contains the other

in its own concept. We have given examples of this. We have seen Lenin at work. Now, however, we shall, to conclude *Essence*, take a term that is on all lips: Lenin's concept of organization. Organization. *You know nothing about organization unless at every step you relate it to its opposite, spontaneity.* It is meaningless without that co-relative, its Other, tied to it. Each developing through the other. That is something new. Merely to say that.

As any reader of *What Is To Be Done* knows, organization for Lenin had no meaning except in relation to spontaneity, spontaneity in a double sense. Organization for Lenin was first the creation of a body of professional revolutionaries, like those that Western Europe had. That is the essential truth and who does not begin there is hopelessly wrong from the start. Russia did not have what Western Europe had. Kautsky, the German marxist, was Lenin's teacher, revered as such. Lenin aimed at a bourgeois revolution, so that Russia might be free to organize an open labour movement such as the Germans had. The backwardness of Russia was that it did not have a movement like the German Social Democracy. For Lenin, Kautsky and the others were a body of professional revolutionaries. There were differences. But it is a crime not to realize that until the betrayal of 1914, Lenin was far more conscious of identity than of differences. The special orientation that became Bolshevism was Russian, the way to making Russia like the others. By this is stamped indelibly the character of leninism up to 1914. Menshevism, the Second International, was essentially the *organization* of millions of workers. Lenin's special type of organization was a special case of the Second International's contribution to the idea of labour: the stage of organization.

Lenin's concept of organization before 1914 was therefore in essence an opposition to the petty-bourgeois spontaneity of Bakunin which Marx had fought. Russia's backwardness made him fight that battle over again, but a battle which had been won in Western Europe. In the special conditions of Russia he fought for the industrial and political organization of the workers. But he had in mind another spontaneity. He had no doubt at all of the importance of revolutionary spontaneity and creative activity of the workers. His organization was to make sure that this spontaneity would have the best opportunity. In 1919, writing against Kautsky, he requoted page after page of a pamphlet written in 1905 from which I have quoted in *Dialectical Materialism and the Fate of Humanity*. Lenin's concept of organization without this is all the petty-bourgeois professional anti-stalinists say it is, all and more.

But after 1914, Lenin no longer saw the organization of pre-1914 as an ideal. That organization had become the enemy of the very things it had been formed to develop—the revolutionary creative activity of the workers. Lenin therefore sought to organize a new—not what had been his aim before 1914, but a body of revolutionaries, who, starting from what had been permanently achieved (and could only be destroyed by actual violence), now tried to organize *the*

revolutionary creative instincts of the people. His concept of organization forced on him in Russia by tsarism became a model for the rest of the world because what had been special for Russia had now become general for the world, in opposition to the previous concept of organization which had become an end in itself—Bernstein's famous phrase, the movement is everything.

Each stage of the concept, organization, therefore has as its opposite *the corresponding stage of its opposite*, spontaneity, (and all this is the result of vast objective forces). That was the essence of leninism. Each concept had the concept of its opposite within itself. And the Communist International did not aim at the organization that the Second International aimed at. It was organization for spontaneity, i.e. for the socialist revolution. History had shown that what Lenin had taken for granted in 1905 had to be specially organized.

Now today, the stalinists *have* organized the creative, revolutionary instincts of the masses. That organization is used for organizing, controlling, disciplining, using, misusing, abusing, the revolutionary energies of the people. That this organization has become the dominating labour organization shows what the revolutionary energies of the people are. These energies are organized. A blind man can see that.

Now what is one to say of a political organization that goes to the people with the proposal to organize a body of professional revolutionaries, in the leninist manner of 1903? Lenin in 1903 faced neither the organic organization of workers as workers (Menshevism) nor the special organization of workers as revolutionaries (stalinism).

What do such 1903 revolutionaries of 1948 propose to organize? A new international of *genuine* revolutionaries? But the genuine revolutionary workers are in the stalinist party, and many in the Menshevik International (and the CIO) are far more revolutionary than many leninists were. There is nothing more to organize. You can organize workers as workers. You can create a special organization of revolutionary workers. But once you have those two you have reached an end. Organization as we have known it is at an end. The task is to abolish organization. The task today is to call for, to teach, to illustrate, to develop *spontaneity*—the free creative activity of the proletariat. The proletariat will find its method of proletarian organization. And, contradiction par excellence, at this stage the vanguard can only organize itself on the basis of the destruction of the stranglehold that the existing organizations have on the proletariat by means of which it is suffering such ghastly defeats. But more, much more of that later.

The doctrine of Essence is an invaluable guide to watching organization and spontaneity develop in the labour movement. Organization has been the backbone of the proletarian movement. Every new stage has meant a more

advanced type of organization which almost at once reflects the pressure of capitalism inside the proletariat. We have insisted upon the fact that the proletariat always breaks up the old organization by impulse, a leap: remember that. But there comes a stage when organization and the maintenance of the organization become ends in themselves in the most direct conflict with the essential movement of the proletariat. That we have seen as Actuality. Organization, as we have known it, has served its purpose. It was a purpose reflecting the proletariat in bourgeois society. The *new* organization, the *new* organism, will begin with spontaneity, i.e. free creative activity, as its necessity. It is by now clear to all except those blinded by ideological spectacles that organization is the obstacle, the opposite, the mountain, the error, which truth has to blast out of its way to find itself. If the communist parties are to endure, then the free activity of the proletariat must be destroyed. If the free activity of the proletariat is to emerge, it can emerge only by destroying the communist parties. It can destroy these parties only by free activity. Free activity means not only the end of the communist parties. It means the end of capitalism. Only free activity, a disciplined spontaneity, can prevent bureaucracy. Essence fought its way, reflecting itself until it came into the open in Actuality and fought its way to its notion of itself. The proletariat has reflected itself in organization after organization until now it will see organization for what it is. The impulse, spontaneity, with which it created new organizations, the means by which it created them, must now become the end. Organization, means to an end, has now usurped the end and become end in itself. We shall have to go to the Notion before we can fully draw all the conclusions. But the road is open, in general. We *know* that politics is concentrated economics. And we know that the revolution will forthwith sublate that relation, alter it, placing economics in the primary place and including politics as the subordinate relation. But organization is concentrated spontaneity.

That relation will have to be similarly altered. And party is concentrated mass. And that relation too will have to be altered. And because the revolution is essentially a political act, the last act of bourgeois politics, it is the relation of concentrated spontaneity and of concentrated mass which will be busted open by the masses. All this is theory, just theorizing. These incorrigible sceptics with the corrugated brainpans do not see that when a revolution takes place in Italy, it will mean that the victorious party will within a few days of the victory number in all probability some six or seven million workers alone—all organized labour. There are two million already, and those in the unions who follow the Communist Party are even more. We have a similar situation in France. The Communist Party in the *only* advanced country in Eastern Europe made one in every three a member of the Party. Precisely because it has power, and is empirical, the Communist Party understands these things. The workers no longer want politics as concentrated economics, they no longer want

organization as concentrated spontaneity. They no longer want the party as concentrated mass. In Italy already the party is the mass. In that sense the contradiction is on the way to vanishing. In England and America it will be impossible to distinguish the revolutionary party from organized labour. It is not the Communist Party, but those who cannot see all this who are not in appearance, but in Essence, “tools of the Kremlin”.

I have drawn the conclusions, abstractly, to the end. Perhaps a little too far for this stage, but no harm is done. The Actuality of organization and spontaneity are now in presence in the [c]onstantly breaking-out impulses, activity, spontaneity, of the workers and the implacable bureaucracies of stalinism. The Essence is the movement. For it now to sweep on, it must find its real nature, of *Necessity*. But to make this concrete needs more work. We have to get hold of the Notion, of the Absolute Idea, before we can see this relation between organization and spontaneity in its concrete truth.

The Doctrine of the Notion

The Doctrine of the Notion is *Subjective Logic*, the logic of Mind, of thought itself. In the Doctrine of Being, we dealt with thought as it watched and felt the influence of simple determinate objects. In Essence we examined a more complex process, objects were “reflected” by thought into thought determinations representing parts of the object; transition from stage to stage. Now we go over into the Notion. The object is no longer plain and simple being. It is no longer divided into thought-determinations. It is a whole once more, but a whole enriched by our previous wrestling with it. And the object being now a whole, thoroughly examined, the examination moves over not to the logic of thought in relation to the object, but to the logic of thought itself, of the concept, *as a concept*.

And so too the notion may, if it be wished, be styled abstract, if the name concrete is restricted to the concrete facts of sense or of immediate perception. For the notion is not palpable to the touch, and when we are engaged with it, hearing and seeing must quite fail us.⁸⁹

But Hegel insists, the notion is concrete, a “true concrete” for thought though it is, there has been incorporated into it all the wealth of being and essence “merged in the unity of thought”.

The previous doctrines had a triple movement. Thus the Doctrine of Being moved between Quality, Quantity and Measure. The Doctrine of Essence moves between Identity, Difference and Opposition (which passes back into Ground);

there is a relation between Quality and Identity; between Quantity and Difference; between Measure and Opposition (or Ground).

In the Doctrine of Being the dialectical movement was confined to transition into *something else*. In the Doctrine of Essence the dialectical movement is confined to transition into something which belonged to the very thing we were examining—"the something else" is the something itself; but its Other, we dug it out. All these are connected together, opposition, higher stages, etc. I shall not do a damned thing about that. This is not a summary of exposition of the *Logic*. It is an introduction to the *Logic*, an illustration of how we should use it, and a demonstration of its validity.

But we should be prepared now to look for a triple movement in the Notion. It is there, and these divisions are very old in the examinations of thought. They are Universal, Particular and Individual. Then Hegel is going to spend long pages on Judgment, on the syllogism: All men are mortal, Gaius is a man, therefore Gaius is mortal. He pursues them into all their different shapes and forms, but they are not abstract, formal, finite, fixed, limited. He shows how they developed out of one another, by contradiction, etc., using all the laws he has worked out in the *objective logic*. Take the Judgment. When you say, "a house is good, according to its character", you make one sort of judgment; when you say "the house, if of such and such a character, is good", you have developed that judgment and so on. He has four main classes of Judgment, the Judgment of Inherence, the Judgment of Subsumption, the Judgment of Necessity, the Judgment of the Notion; but the Judgment of Inherence, for instance, is divided into the Positive Judgment, the Negative Judgment, the Infinite Judgment; and each of the others has its three divisions. I have not worked through the Judgments, but I know that the Judgment of Inherence corresponds to Quality in the Doctrine of Being and to Identity in the Doctrine of Essence; that the Judgment of Subsumption and Necessity correspond to Quantity in the Doctrine of Being and Difference in the Doctrine of Essence. The same with the syllogism and so on. Hegel says, in ordinary logic books they tell you, here are these forms: apply them or learn them or do something with them. *He* says: they didn't just fall from the sky, they each came from somewhere, at a certain stage of development; they moved to higher and more complicated forms, they proceeded to these higher forms by a certain process. In *Dialectics of Nature*, Engels has what is in my modest opinion a very satisfying passage on the Judgment.

Now if you have been paying attention you will now know what the Doctrine of the Notion is about; it deals with this development of the standards of consciousness as such. You remember the Preface and the Introduction to the *Phenomenology*, the thing tested and the testing thing. Notion deals with the testing thing—the apparatus of thought. And despite all Hegel's raptures about how now we are in the blue sphere of the World-Spirit, etc., in the Subjective

Logic he traces as logically objective a development as you could wish. But it is well to remember that we are in the realm of thought. Its destructive character is *development*, by which Hegel means that it shows only what is immanent in it, for example, the plant is developed from its germ. Nothing appears in the plant which is not contained in the germ. Identical twins show that very clearly. At fifty they often look exactly alike, which means that their germ contained all that they afterwards became. Hegel is saying that whereas in the Doctrine of Being the thing changes into something else, but something else which though "else" is really a part of it, it reflects an interior other; in the Dialectic of the Notion, the small thing, the abstract beginning, constantly expands and develops into broader and broader, more concrete, a more rich, more complicated, more all-embracing stages, which were in it from the very beginning. Thought, remember? Thought. Ideas as ideas.

With this very modest contradiction we can now begin. I shall interpret freely and then stick the passage down. Nowhere, not even in Marx, have I been so thrilled at the sheer logical divining and interpretative power of the human intellect. If you want to try it out yourself the passage is on p. 242 of the larger *Logic* where he is taking up the Particular; he has already dealt with Universal. We haven't to deal specially with Universal. We are familiar with it. State is a universal—it embraces every kind of political government. It is entirely concrete. It is entirely abstract. Such another is "the revolution". Another universal is socialism. It means everything. Yet it means nothing in particular.

Socialism, then, is a Universal (in thought, mind you, a concept). It is as a germ, it contains a lot of things in it. This germ takes determinate form, a *particular* form. This is *its* being, as for example in *The Communist Manifesto* or in the Manifesto of the First International. The Notion as Universal becomes a determinate notion. But in the Doctrine of Being when nothing became something, it was a simple "immediate". Not so in the Notion. When the Universal of socialism becomes determinate, this is no simple immediacy. It is "equal to itself". It is a form of mediation which is absolute. (You have to *feel* this.) It is not there only waiting to be transformed into some Other. True it contains Intro-Reflection or Essence. It is not going to stay there forever. It will change, it will move. But to give some rough *examples*: when Marx wrote his concepts down and defined them, he did not do this looking to see contradictions in them, from which he would find a higher truth. No, that was determinate socialism. Leninism as concept and doctrine was concrete socialism. You see this in the distinction between the bourgeois revolution and the proletarian revolution (examples only). The bourgeois revolution in Russia as Lenin saw it, aimed at doing something which would create, unloose the possibility of the proletariat organising freely (as in Europe) and struggling for socialism. That was a transition. But the proletarian revolution is the proletarian revolution. It is not fundamentally a transition to anything else.

True it has at a given time weaknesses, defects; these will be removed. But it is posed in its own right. It is a mediation, it does not comprise the Universal in its full totality, but it is an *absolute* mediation. It is the Notion in “principle”, a word Hegel uses often in this section, and he says that any Notion whose particular form is not the Notion in principle is no good. It is “barren”. Now comes a brilliant use of dialectic, which will give amazing results. Socialism is a Universal which in 1864 takes a determinate, concrete form. But, says Hegel, it is “clothed” in the Universal. The determinate form, what Marx writes, has certain weaknesses, defects, “differences” with the Universal. He and everybody else who has any sense knows that. The doctrines are concrete but they are not *complete* socialism. But they are written *in terms of the Universal*: this and that and that are socialism. Therefore the doctrines of 1864 become content and the Universal becomes form, and therefore abstract. In the pure Universal it is just absolute negativity, socialism which we know will have to negate and negate until it finds its total realisation. But when it finds in principle a determinate content, this content is determinate, which makes the Universal in it abstract.

Here is the complete paragraph:

The determinateness of the particular is simple as principle (as was seen); but it is simple also as moment of totality—as determinateness against the other determinateness. The Notion, in so far as it determines or distinguishes itself, points negatively at its unity and takes the form of one of its moments (which is of ideal nature) of being: as determinate Notion it has a Determinate Being in general. But this Being no longer signifies bare immediacy but Universality—immediacy which through absolute mediation is equal to itself and equally contains the other moment, Essence or Intro-Reflection. This Universality which clothes the determinate is abstract Universality. The particular contains Universality as its Essence; but, in so far as the determinateness of the difference is posited, and thereby has Being, this Universality is related to the difference as form, and the determinateness as such is content. Universality becomes form in so far as the difference exists as the essential; whereas in the purely universal it exists only as absolute negativity, and not as difference which is posited as such.⁹⁰

Now to go on. The first sentence I cannot understand—give me a few moments—but after that it is plain sailing. (Why all this excitement? Because just over the page Understanding gets a going over, is exposed, in a manner that does the heart good.) In the determinate Notion, the Notion is outside itself. It is socialism, the pure negativity. But it is determinate. Marx’s doctrines, ideas, are concrete enough. They will appear in the Commune in a few years. And though there are differences between socialism, as a pure universal, and socialism in its determinate form, yet there is no other socialism

and the identity is close enough. But the identity is merely “immediate”. It is not the totality, in 1864, not the full, complete idea. (Today we are much closer to this. One world, international socialism, etc.)

In itself, it is this completeness as the germ is *in itself* the plant. It is *for itself*, in the determinate form, *for itself* in principle. But although there is mediation, there are going to be further stages, yet these stages are not “posited”, the main business is not to develop what is inherent and bound to appear. The main business is what is. But precisely because we are dealing with something *in principle*, the content has the form of indifference to its Universality. It is not the totality. OK. But it is not, as in the Doctrine of Essence, unable to move a step without looking back to see what it reflects, and looking forward to see what will come. Sure we are going to mediate, but this thing here and now is good enough for us.

And now, my friends, we approach. Let the maestro speak for himself now and we shall trail along behind. (You will get some shocks, though.)

This is the proper place also to mention the circumstance which has caused Understanding latterly to be held in such small esteem and to be ranked after Reason—namely the fixity which it imparts to the determinatenesses, and hence to the finitudes. This fixity consists in the form of abstract Universality which has just been considered: by virtue of it they become immutable.⁹¹

Trotskyism, seeing that Second (*reformist*) International and Third (*revolutionary*) International and enemy-of-private property bureaucracy were embodiments “in principle” of socialism, of the Universal, which they *undoubtedly were* completely failed to study p. 244 of the *Logic* and recognise that these, concrete as they were, were yet abstract Universals in the sense that Hegel has so carefully explained. They were only a form. They were not totality. And precisely because they were abstract Universality, they could become fearfully fixed and ferociously finite. The very fact that they are Universals is what gives them their toughness and their staying power. In simple Being and reflective Essence, movement is easier.

For qualitative determinateness, and Determination of Reflection, exist essentially as limited, and, in their barrier, have a relation to their Other; they thus contain the necessity of transition and passing away. But Universality (which they have in Understanding) gives them the form of Intro-Reflection, which withdraws them from the relation to other and renders them imperishable.⁹²

Socialism! A world socialism, a revolutionary international an international that is reformist, my God ! These are not *perfected* examples, but *they* are not *ordinary* manifestations. These are *Universals*. And so Understanding gets stuck with them. Universals they were, but *limited* Universals. As Hegel says, Understanding pays these things a respect which belongs only to the “pure” Notion and only to a determinateness which was itself Universal.

Now in the pure Notion this eternity belongs to its own nature, and so its abstract determinations would be eternal essentialities only according to their form; but their content is not adequate to this form, and consequently they are not truth and imperishability. Their content is not adequate to the form, because it is not determinateness itself as universal; that is, it is not as totality of the differentia of the Notion, or not itself the whole form ...⁹³

Now I don't know, but it seems to me that Hegel, having examined phenomena and totalities of all kinds, has here extracted the process of the thought of Understanding in a manner which makes us see *our* problems in a new and infinitely richer light. There are others coming which will startle and illuminate us. But Hegel is a dialectician. There is not only difference, there is identity, there is a connection. See how Hegel, who has been belabouring Understanding, now shows us that it has an indisputable—yes, sir—*indisputable* place in dialectic:

Understanding then represents the infinite force which determines the Universal, or conversely imparts fixed persistence through the form of Universality to what in determinateness has in and for itself no stability; and it is not the fault of understanding if no further progress is made.⁹⁴

That is clear enough. Understanding then even in the Notion is the kind of thought which determines the Universal. It is a positive quality. It says: boys, this is it. Look how this embodies the Universal. See how it represents socialism here, and there, and over there. See how this reformist International is reformism incarnate. Understanding in fact is genuinely revolutionary, and in the *establishment* of a determinate Universal, you cannot tell the difference between it and Reason. Reason in fact uses Understanding for this purpose. (Isn't this wonderful ! The *arriere-pensee*, the things I am saying and not saying.) But Understanding is overwhelmed by these magnificent principled determinatenesses. He wants to settle down now and get to work. When Universal begins to wish to get out of this Particular, Understanding rages furiously. This, my friends, he says, is Universal. It has faults, but it is *Universal*. At last, when Understanding can stay there no longer he moves, but to do

what? He says: "My friends, we have no troublesome thinking to do. The plans are here. The great architect of our now regrettably degenerated Universals, he left us the final blueprints. All we have to do is to push aside the impostors and 'erect the old structure afresh'."

Understanding then imparts "fixed persistence". But, says Hegel, and this is salutary if totally unexpected:

It is a subjective impotence of reason which allows these determinatenesses to count in this manner, and is unable to lead them back to unity through the dialectic force which is opposed to this abstract Universality, that is, through the peculiar nature (in other words, the Notion) of these determinatenesses.⁹⁵

Here are two ideas of substantial importance for us. Reason leaves poor Understanding stuck in its finitudes. *Subjective Reason* is responsible. It is too weak to overcome the gap. The effort has to be made. And how? *By seeing* the peculiar nature, i.e. the Notion of these fixed, limited determinatenesses. That is plain enough. The Notion is a free, creative working class, a working class which is *not* what it is in capitalism. The determinate Notion does its best, but when this is exhausted you have to get back to socialism, to your Universal of the beginning, and thus get rid of an exhausted, finite, limited particular. A new particular is needed.

Understanding is mischievous. That is correct.

It is true that through the form of abstract Universality understanding gives them what may be called such a hardness of Being as they do not possess in the spheres of Quality and of Reflection; but by this simplification understanding also spiritualises them and so sharpens them that they receive only at this extreme point the capacity of dissolving and passing over into their opposite.⁹⁶

Understanding, by its obstinacy, its sticking to the finite categories, prepares them for the stage where they must be dissolved and pass over into their opposite. Bear in mind that the Universal uses a particular. When that particular is no good it throws it over. That particular perishes.

The highest maturity or stage which any Something can reach is that in which it begins to perish.⁹⁷

It is at this stage that subjective Reason is *compelled*, COMPELLED, to intervene. We shall need that idea often.

But this is the peculiar property of the Notion.

Understanding commits the blunder of blunders by making the determinate Notion imperishable. The only thing imperishable is the Universality of the Notion. That quality belongs to the Notion alone

and consequently the dissolution of the finite lies expressed in it itself, and in infinite proximity.

It is the Universal which makes it clear that finite categories are going to be destroyed, *principled* though they are.

This Universality immediately argues the determinateness of the finite and expresses its inadequacy to itself. Or rather, the adequacy of the finite is already given; the abstract determinate is posited as being one with Universality, and as not for itself alone, for then it would be only determinate, but only as unity of itself and of the universal, that is, as Notion.⁹⁸

The general argument is clear. If not, work it out yourself.

Says Hegel, “The ordinary practice of separating Understanding and Reason must therefore be condemned in every respect.

Understanding has its place. It is the abuse of the fixed, limited category which is criminal. And Hegel plays on a sad but salutary note. Understanding, by carrying the thing to the heights it does, *thereby* prepares the way for Reason to make the jump. If you are not able to say that our very *principled* category, nationalised property, and a principled category it can seem to be, if you are not able to say: “In view of what socialism is, I have to repudiate this category and get back to fundamentals and create a new criterion,” if you cannot do that, then you persist in the determination and end by making *false* determination the means by which you destroy everything.

I don't see how any reasonable person can deny this much: that Hegel, faced with the workers' state theorists, would be able to say, “I know those people. I have seen *that sort of thing* happen dozens of times. I wrote about it in the

But that is not all. The Notion has, you remember, a third division, Individual. You remember the three, Universal, Particular, *Individual*. The individual is the same as *Actuality*. The concrete. (But we are dealing with thought, the concrete is the concrete stage of *thought*.) As I see it, we have socialism, the Universal, looking for somewhere to place itself. Marxism, in general, puts forward a general programme. Let us form an International of such and such principles. That is a Particular. But on 14 May 1871, Karl Marx not in general but concretely wrote a document about the Paris Commune, and expressed certain concrete ideas, proposals, and forecasts. In the sphere of thought this document is a concrete, an Individual.

Now the Particular is midway between the Universal and the Individual. When you move out of it, you can move out of it, either back to the Universal—then the Universal, disregarding the particular, “ascends to higher and highest genus”—or you “descend” (Hegel’s word) into the concrete Individual. I hope the point is clear. And then comes a superb statement:

At this point the divagation occurs by which abstraction leaves the road of the Notion and deserts the truth.¹⁰⁰

This is precisely Trotsky’s theory of the permanent revolution. The *concrete* struggle in Russia he ignored. Was it a bourgeois revolution? Lenin said it was and concretely waged proletarian war against the liberal bourgeoisie and the Mensheviks, their agents. His programme, his ideas, his Notion of *socialism*, yes, of *socialism*, could find its deepest profundity precisely because of that concreteness. But Trotsky’s theory of the permanent revolution? Hegel immediately, *immediately* nails it. At this point he said occurs the divagation from the truth. And what form does it take?

Its higher and highest universal to which it rises is but the surface which has less and less content.

Precisely. The permanent revolution had no content at all. The only concrete thing that came from it was the fact that it drove Trotsky *always* towards the Mensheviks and against Leninism, in all the long, hard, difficult years in which Bolshevism was hammered out. He scorned the concrete. As Hegel continues:

The Individuality which it scorns is that profundity in which the Notion

comprehends itself and is posited as Notion.

If *anybody* can understand this, we can. Trotsky soared into the thin abstractions of the permanent revolution. *Nothing came of it.* Nothing. And it was Lenin's concrete theories, dealing with the actual, the Individual, from which came all the wonderful insights and illumination which enriched the notion of *socialism*.

The Notion is concrete. It is thought but it is concrete. It is a judgment, a decision, an action, an intervention. It is not knowledge in the head for the sake of the head. Matter, society, acts by impulse, makes its knots, the knots form old categories, old categories make new categories, new categories clarify matter and society, for thought teaches me intelligent action. The categories are the highest form of matter, at any rate inseparable from matter, the form of today, which will be content tomorrow because it is content already, content posited. Without this concreteness the Notion gets *no place*. You cannot apprehend it by abstraction. Abstraction remains motionless without individuality.

Life, Spirit, God, and also the pure Notion cannot therefore be apprehended by abstraction, because it keeps off from its products Individuality, the principle of singularity and personality, and thus reaches nothing but universalities lacking both life and spirit, colour and content.¹⁰¹

Trotsky's theory of the permanent revolution was precisely lacking in these. Lenin it was who got from the concrete life, spirit, colour, content. But it is not only the struggles of 1905-17. The struggles of *today* illuminate these absolutely incredible analyses of Hegel, incredible because so universally valid. The official Fourth International has no concept whatever of socialism. All Trotsky can say about Russia after twenty-five years is: revise the plan, reinstate the soviets. He has learnt nothing. The same old content, no life, no spirit, no colour. And we, have we any special life, spirit, colour? That others will have to judge. I shall go at that problem before we are done. But I repeat now as we said in *The Invading Socialist Society*: If you reprint *State and Revolution*, *The Threatening Catastrophe*, *Can the Bolsheviks Retain State Power?* and *The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government*, you get a clearer picture of concrete socialism, concrete perspectives, *concrete* action for the workers to follow than in all the writings of the Fourth International for twenty-five years.

Hegel is remorseless. And I constantly marvel at the amount of work he must have done to get the thing down so pat, *in abstractions*. He continues as follows to tear Understanding apart:

You cannot escape the consequences of the Notion. A Notion is a Notion. It embraces all the parts and they are inseparable. Understanding first of all gets Universalities lacking all colour, content, life and spirit. But these products of abstraction which have scorned the Individual, the concrete, are individuals themselves. Understanding takes the concrete and makes that into a Universal. It therefore sees the Universal only as determinate Universality: and therefore the concrete, the Individual, which it has elevated into this position has taken upon itself the tremendous task of determining itself (self-relation). For this the concrete thus pushed up into the situation of Universal is quite unfitted.

Does this sound rather abstract? Not to me. We have seen nationalised property, the concrete in Russia, taken and pushed into the position of Universal. What socialism is, what it aims at, what it means for me, all that has gone by the board. That has become the purest abstraction: the workers' parties competing peacefully in their soviets, the plan revised in the interests of the toilers, etc. etc. When you protest, you are invited to observe how much coal, steel, oil, and literacy there is. You point out that in 1928 when they were back at the 1917 level there were only maybe a few thousand, or even more, in concentration camps, etc. But every time the coal, steel, etc., are increased, the totalitarianism and the corruption increase, and so we have a graph. As production under planning increases, so every bourgeois evil increases until we have fifteen to twenty millions in concentration camps, forced labour camps, etc., and such a monstrous state as no mortal had ever imagined. It is surely time to think about socialism—examine what we meant by it and we mean by it. No, not for them. The whole thing revolves around nationalised property and *if, if* nationalised property *continues* to preserve the bureaucracy and commit these monstrosities, then shall we at last go back to re-examine our universal, socialism? By Christ, no. *Finish away with Marxism instead.* Throw it out. *It has failed us.* Nationalised property remains master of the field.

Here is the extract, judge for yourself:

But the unity of the Notion is so inseparable that even these products of abstraction, while they are supposed to omit Individuality, are individuals themselves. It raises the concrete into Universality, and takes the universal only as determinate Universality: but then this is just Individuality which has resulted in the shape of self-relating determinateness. Consequently abstraction is a separation of the concrete and an isolation of its determinations: it seizes only individual properties and moments, for its product must contain that which it is itself.¹⁰²

You get the last sentence? This Abstract Universal tears up the concrete into pieces. It takes isolated pieces of it, and with this as the basis of its thinking all

it can now produce is what it took up and made into a Universal. That is the whole procedure of the workers' statist. Germain thinks only in terms of nationalised property, plan, dual character of the bureaucracy. He could say: in Poland nationalisation had taken place before the Russians came in. The Russians destroyed the power which the workers had their hands on and brought back elements of the bourgeois class. All Germain has to say is: it is or is not nationalised property exactly and behold at any rate the dual character of the bureaucracy. His Universal is not the careful elaboration of the basic concept which Marx and Engels made after any event—Marx on the Commune, Lenin in *State and Revolution*. No, sir. His Universal is now nationalised property and all its products bear that stamp.

See now what happens. This Universal has taken up the concrete, the Individual, into itself, pushing the real Universal into the thin air of the most abstract of abstractions. The individual as content and the Universal as form are distinct from each other. You remember that at the beginning the Universal entered freely into the First International. That programme, that conception was not perfect, but such as it was you could talk about in terms of socialism. You took the Universal as a form in which you placed, worked out the particular content which you had. You remember too that this made the Universal abstract, but an abstraction which "clothed" the particular content. But here Universal as form is one thing. Content is another. Not even Germain can use the terms of socialism to describe the Russian barbarism, and nobody today has the nerve to say any more that the proletariat in Russia is the ruling class. The Universal of Understanding, of Germain, is not absolute form. It cannot even talk in terms of those absolute necessities of socialism, workers, power, independent action, workers as masters of *themselves*, in fundamental opposition to capitalism, where the industrial system is their slave-driver. No. Germain cannot do it except as an abstraction. However inadequate the First International was, as a conception, it could "clothe" itself in these things. (This I take to be the *general* sense of the passage. The original should be looked up in the German.) But as we continue the examination we see finally that this abstract Understanding has produced a peculiar kind of Universality. By making it so abstract and then tying it up with the concrete, the abstract Universal itself has become a concrete.

Here is the extract:

The distinction between this individuality of its products and the Individuality of the Notion is that, in the former, the individual as content and the universal as form are distinct from each other—just because the former does not exist as absolute form, or as the Notion itself, nor the latter as the totality of form. But this closer consideration shows the abstract itself as unity of the individual content and abstract Universality, that is, as *concrete*—which is the opposite of

what it is supposed to be.¹⁰³

And in 1948 we do not operate in the void. The moment you lose the socialist Universal, no power on earth can save you from state-capitalist barbarism.

Now for the final passage. It offers us a good opportunity to sum up. Remember the movement of the Notion is *development*. It is free power. It is thought, mind you, the concept seeking fulfilment in thought. The *Communist Manifesto*, the *Manifesto and Programme of the First International*, Marx on the Commune, Lenin in *State and Revolution*. This is the concept developing itself. Lenin's *State and Revolution* is a particular form of the Universal as is the programme of the Communist International and the 21 points. But the Individual concrete is the day-to-day laws, decisions, articles, decrees, speeches, etc. That is the concrete, the individual notion. So that the Universal of socialism and the particular form of *State and Revolution* become concrete in the individual acts, ideas, places, programmes and conflicts etc. The abstract is the soul of the Individual, the concrete. Why? Because without the Universal and Particular, the concrete makes no sense. This is an advanced case of the relation between the Idea and Actuality which we dealt with in the Doctrine of Essence.

Here is the extract:

But Individuality is not only the return of the Notion into itself; it is also immediately its loss. In Individuality it is *in itself*; and, because of the manner in which it is *in itself*, it becomes external to itself and enters into actuality. Abstraction is the soul of Individuality, and, as such, is the relation of negative to negative; and it, as has been seen, is not external to the universal and the particular but immanent; and they through it are concrete, content, and individual. And Individuality as this Negativity is determinate determinateness, is distinguishing as such; through this introReflection of distinction it becomes fixed; the determining of the particular takes place only through Individuality, for it is that abstraction which now, as Individuality, is posited abstraction.¹⁰⁴

I advise you to be in no hurry. Read the passages over and over again, especially the difficult ones. Familiarise yourself with them. There is a great temptation. It is to read these, get only a general idea, and then fasten on to what is familiar—the purely social and political analysis that I make following these technical sections. If you do that you will never learn to handle the *Logic*. Work at these technical passages for what they teach but also as exercises, until they sink in, and you begin to think in those terms.

We now have to do one last passage from this Introduction to the Notion. Do not be misled by my hopping and skipping and jumping as I *have* to do, into forgetting that the internal consistency, the structural logic of the logic itself is marvellous. Development into development, in general, then split into its parts, and the development of the first gone over again, but now at a higher level and a deeper penetration, to explode, leap into something higher, whereupon the old processes gain new depths, etc. This is precisely *logic*. It is not life, i.e. history. And only when logic is a logical, impeccable movement, can you then deal with the innumerable manifestations of life. This I can only mention and motion to here and there in passing. But to demonstrate that, no, not me.

So before he ends the Notion in general, Hegel goes back to something which has always concerned him. He began it in the Doctrine of Being—Quality—with the real infinite and the dead infinite. He went back at it in the Doctrine of Essence in Ground, and the Being or not-Being of the Finite as the basis of Ground. Now he has shown us how the Universal takes a particular from in the Particular and becomes concrete in the Individual. You cannot understand the Individual unless you see it as a concreting of the Universal, and positing further abstraction of the Universal because from it the Universal will find the basis of still further abstractions. For the Individual is going to move on. Now:

The individual, then, as self-relating negativity, is immediate selfidentity of the negative; it is-for-self. In other words it is abstraction which determines the Notion, according to its moment (which is of ideal nature) of Being, as *immediate*. Thus the individual is a qualitative One or This.¹⁰⁵

He takes it back to quality, the Doctrine of Being. Now remember your Doctrine of Being:

According to this quality it is, first, self-repulsion, by which process the many other Ones are presupposed; and secondly, it is negative relation against these presupposed others; and, in so far, the individual is exclusive.¹⁰⁶

But—as Rosa Luxemburg used to write—attention! Universality must watch its relation to these concrete Ones. Universality is a moment of the concrete, the Individual. But it is not merely an element of the Individual.¹⁰⁷

If by the universal is meant that which is common to more than one individual, then the beginning is being made from their indifferent persistence, and the immediacy of Being is mixed with the determination of the Notion. The lowest

possible image of the universal in its relation to the individual is this external relation of it as a mere common element.

You say that whatever form a concrete workers' state may take, it is distinguished always by nationalised property. It is the lowest possible form of the Universal. The rest of the section takes this up in detail. Hegel, particularly here in the Notion, insists that Individuality is posited "not in the external but in a notional distinction"—nationalised property is to be seen in the light of your notion of what socialism is. *Don't do that*. Don't make the mistake of taking this concrete, this merely common persistent element as the Universal! You then will, as sure as day, end by making *it* all your notion. Then you say: the world has now reached a stage where capitalism can no longer continue. From this you say that this economy must obviously be nationalised and planned. You then say that if the Russian bureaucracy continues for a long time, after the war, it is obviously the precursor of a new ruling class. Then we have to agree that the Marxist expectation of socialism is a Utopia. That is where you land in thought and we are dealing with thought. That Trotsky as an individual would have thrown himself on the side of the masses and would have repudiated pessimism and defeatism in the heat of the class struggle, that we haven't to argue about. But the whole methodology had within it the destruction of the basis on which he stood. For he stated most precisely that the Russian bureaucracy would restore private property. So that although the time of its continuance is not too important (the world situation being what it is) the obvious determination of the bureaucracy to *maintain* nationalised property and fight another world war for it, this, eats at the heart of those who insist on carrying on Trotsky's method. He made a finite into an infinite. He took the being of the finite and made it into an Absolute. He took a moment of the Universal, and made it into the Universal itself. Whence these tears. Hegel is not finished with this by the way. In his last section of the Idea of Cognition, he takes this finite and finite, being and not-being of the Absolute, common persistence in the Notion and finally lays it to rest in a masterly display on the Definition. But I can tell you in advance that I shall leave out the Definition. Too much is involved.

And now before we go on, do me a little favour, friends. Just sit down and read this whole previous section over. No? OK. As Marx said in the last paragraph of the *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, do what you like now. I have saved my own soul.

Leninism and the Notion

The discerning reader (the sceptical reader we may ignore, the hostile reader we are striking murderous wounds at in every paragraph), the discerning

reader will now be saying: "Amazing, I agree. This Hegel seems to have worked out a way by which men, once they slip off the rails, can be seen to follow as if bewitched certain patterns of thought. Your illustrations directed against Trotskyism certainly illuminate Trotskyism. But on the whole, this, valuable as it is, is in this instance negative. You say, for instance, Trotsky's Universal is without colour, content, etc.—pure abstraction. What is yours, using the dialectic method? Show me how you, by not ascending to "higher and highest genus" but by sticking to Individuality enrich *your* Universal. You say, Lenin did in Russia before 1917. I agree, more or less. I am a discerning reader. I see that you are working up, stage by stage, a positive position. I think it is about time that we paid more attention to that and less to Trotskyism."

Correct on the whole, *but only on the whole*. But we are now going to settle down to a concrete and not a general exposition of dialectical thinking which will show us the Notion in action. The proof will be the result. And to set all doubt at rest, let me say here at once: I propose, step by step, to build up a positive line of development, I have been doing this, which will end in an unmistakably concrete Notion of socialism as Universal and the revolutionary struggle today, *and* tomorrow, not tomorrow in general, but our tomorrow. This work would be useless, in fact reactionary (I cannot stay to explain) if it did not do that. But the correct method of doing that is the method I am following. It will be easier for those who follow after. I am starting from scratch.

But this job is preliminary to that. Patience. Patience. Patience. Work your way in. We have to get a notion of socialism, the notion of 1948. But we have to work through Leninism. *Today our movement is not beyond Leninism*. The proletariat is far beyond the proletariat of Lenin's day. But our movement is not. To get beyond him, we have to go into and through him. But the process demands, *for us*, the complete, the patient exposure of Trotskyism from all sides. We are not finished with that. Learn from Hegel. Learn how to go back and back and back again to Understanding, until the method becomes part of the structure, the structure of the mind. Strive to get "quite simple insight" into the whole business. You will read the *Logic* and find out things for yourself. If you haven't the time or energy for that great task, read these extracts, over and over again, working out the interpretations, making new ones, getting to know them almost by heart. It would be a catastrophe if you read this with the idea that it was only a justification, a preparation for our concrete theories. Worse still, if when it was all over someone said: "Good. Now what do we do now. How do we put it into practice in the class struggle?" God help us, *that* attitude would be pretty awful. I don't think any of us will have it.

But I am writing *en famille* and as these ideas strike me, I put them down. I am a bit nervous, you see, that as we expand our theory, and clarify ourselves *politically*, all the work on the *Logic* will seem to have been done with this

purpose. Enough of that. Logic for theory, but at this stage also, for us, logic for logic's sake.

This being said, however, we can now move in the theoretical sphere. We are now equipped to tackle Leninism, the highest point of our movement so far. We have to mount to that height to move on into the infinite, the uncharted infinite that faces us.

If the discussion rages around the political conclusions as such, and not around the political conclusions in logical terms, then, immediately at least, the time has been wasted.

The Development of Lenin's Notions

Lenin's conception of the party was a conception of the party in bourgeois society. The party, as the Third International developed it, was fundamentally analysed, outlined and projected long before 1914. Lenin was not thinking of socialism. *That* he left to Trotsky and his permanent revolutionary abstractions. That this conception became an international expression for the world proletariat is in accordance with a certain law of such creations.

Politically backward France produced the French revolution. Economically and politically backward Germany produced the classical philosophy and marxism. Frustrated Russia produced the great Russian literature of the nineteenth century (Gogol, Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, Turgenev, Belinsky, Chernyshevsky, and Chekhov, are as distinct a stage of the European *consciousness* as was, in its way, the Classical Philosophy, and they deserve a place in a new *Phenomenology of Mind*. That, however, is another story). If backward Germany produced the classical philosophy *and* marxism, Russia produced the Russian writers and Bolshevism. My young American friends, your culturally and politically backward America is going to produce a proletarian literature, a specific social expression, and *a new proletarian social organization*. But this will come from Detroit and not from 116 University Pl. nor from our fluent Johnsonite pens. This law may be called the law of historical compensation. Its importance is that in bringing up to date a delayed reaction, it projects into the future, and backwardness is transformed making its very backwardness the dynamic of transition into vanguardism, its opposite. What a phrase!

Lenin therefore said the last word upon the party as an instrument of struggle in bourgeois society. That now is old stuff. What! Yes. Old stuff. And if I had time I would stick twenty pages of paper together and write an old stuff as large as three men. What the hell is the use of going around today telling workers that what is needed is a body of professional revolutionaries, devoted to the political struggle, internationally united, and the mortal enemy of

traditional reformism, etc. The workers know that. The communist parties consist of just such bodies. Their policy is corrupt. But the organization, the basic type, that is what Lenin aimed at. Who chooses to misunderstand this, at this stage, can go to hell. The thing is *part of the common consciousness today*. All this setting up of little splinters as parties for workers to join, which will little by little grow, that is the quintessence of stupidity. We have no such illusions any more, thank God.

Thus it was that from the individuality, the concrete despised struggle for bourgeois democracy in Russia came the pattern for the revolutionary struggle for socialism needed by the whole world and above all the advanced countries. So it was that the *Notion of socialism, the Universal*, was enriched. The workers had to *establish* it. The Russian revolution had to take place. But Lenin's *thought* made that leap in 1914. *The abstract ideas about the struggle for socialism*, things which he had only drawn so to speak in passing from the concrete struggle in Russia, ideas which would be needed concretely in a future Russia, these suddenly became concrete propositions for the whole advanced world. I wonder if you have it. I'll try again.

Lenin never bothered himself about the struggle for socialism in Russia. Even up to 1917 he did not. *That* would come after. But up to 1914 periodically the concrete Russian struggle would lead him to make abstract generalizations about socialism drawn from the concrete. *He never even applied them to the Second International*, never generalized them into any system, except when Rosa Luxemburg or the others attacked his positions on Russia. Now suddenly in 1914 he had to take his Russian experience of the struggle for bourgeois democracy and lift it into concrete ideas for the struggle for international socialism. (Trotsky, who had isolated himself from Lenin's *concrete* struggle, made *no* contribution to the struggle for international socialism. On *every* serious point he was wrong.)

We therefore have a perfect example of the great principle of the transformation of the ideal into the real. And this ideal could be so rapidly transformed into reality because it was an ideal which had here developed in the closest relation with the concrete. The struggles in Russia produced the principles on which the Third International was based. The objective situation in the advanced countries met what was only an ideal for the failure of Russia. We live in an international world tending to unity. Wherever the class struggle is most advanced, there the ideas that emerge, where elucidated by genius, though they may seem remote, represent material for the enrichment of the Universal, for the concretizing of the Notion, for all of us, for *all*.

Still Lenin had nothing concrete to say about the actual building of socialism. The struggle for socialism was the struggle against the war, his concept of struggle. He had to wait for a word from the workers to become as positive

about socialism as he had been positive about bourgeois democracy in Russia.

This came in 1917, with the soviets-concrete socialism. I have said, and I still say it till I am contradicted and proved wrong: the 1905 soviets came and went, not understood. The Bolshevik programme, written in 1903, was unchanged by the 1905 soviets. Trotsky led the chief soviet. His theory of permanent revolution never led him to analyse the soviet and draw from it what Marx drew from the Commune. Which proves the completely abstract character of the theory of permanent revolution. But Lenin did little better. His reason is plain. The soviets did not fit into bourgeois society and Lenin was then concerned with a bourgeois revolution. (His attitude was most instructive. In 1919 writing against Kautsky in that same article which he quoted about the creative activity of the workers, he spoke about the close co-operation between the Menshevik and Bolshevik papers in 1905. The Menshevik paper, edited by Trotsky, "leaned to the dictatorship of the proletariat", the Bolshevik to the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry. But, says Lenin, *that did not matter.*)

It was the workers who did the theoretical work on the soviet (as it was the Italian workers of 1945 who did the real theoretical work on leninism). *They* thought over the soviet. They analysed it and remembered it, and within a few days of the February revolution they organized in the great centres of Russia this unprecedented social formation. Lenin saw it this time. He soon threw the bourgeois-democratic revolution into the waste-paper basket, and he took some notes he had been making on the state and created a *new* Universal. You find this in *State and Revolution*. It would be more correct. to say that the Universal found a new determination.

It will be many years before justice is done to this amazing, this incredible man. He took the *Russian* soviets and created a new Universal, for the *world*. *State and Revolution* as we have it does not even have the chapters he intended to devote to Russia, he did not find time to write them. The book deals with socialism in general. He says this is how socialism will come *in the whole world*. He says that in Germany, in Britain, in France, in America, it is through the soviets that the workers will concretize the struggle for socialism. No soviets have appeared in any of these countries. He had a Russian revolution on his hands. But he began by getting clear to himself and his party an up-to-date notion of socialism *in general*. The instrument of testing had to be changed, as well as the thing tested. He does this in the middle of the revolution itself. Ten thousand other men would have been busyng themselves with the concrete struggle. Imagine the scorn with which Shachtman and some others would have watched Lenin busy scribbling down these abstract theories when the revolution itself was there, calling upon them to go to the masses, etc. etc.

Lenin wrote his little book. And from that moment, that moment and no

other, not *before*, his programme, his concrete work, in Russia, was devoted to the elucidation of *State and Revolution* in Russian conditions. In this he was alone. The writings of himself and the others are there to prove it.

What is the essence of *State and Revolution*? It is this. The armed workers, *all of them*, form a new type of state. They rush the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie, but they, as armed workers, carry out universal accounting and control of production and distribution, and this universal accounting and control is the distinguishing mark of the new society in production. This universal accounting and control is *a new productive force*. I have shown this quite clearly in *The Invading Socialist Society*. Nobody (Germain and co.) says anything. They all pretend that the attack does not exist. They are busy with *important things*. They believe that they can ignore the Johnsonites. Same way they ignored our state-capitalism thesis in 1940 and 1941 until Yugoslavia and Poland came crashing down on them and they blink in terror and run to *Revolution Betrayed*¹⁰⁸ to see what they can find.

Yet without mastering leninism they cannot begin to understand the world about them. The universal accounting and control was a source of new energy, the creative force of millions upon millions who formerly, instead of contributing to, had drained from, society, much of whose force had had to be spent in suppressing them. As he said later, capitalist production was not unrelieved anarchy. It had been “organized” by the spontaneously developing world market. World market and value production were a form of organization. As Marx shows in the third volume of *Capital*, the crisis is a form of restoring balance to an economy whose disproportion has reached an unbearable level. Lenin proposed to substitute for this automatic regulation of capitalist society, the conscious creative energies of the world proletariat, not some bespectacled planners busy adding up figures and apportioning calories in some bureaux.

There are devoted revolutionaries who will read *State and Revolution* a thousand times and never understand it. I know the type well. Their conception, the Universal of their socialism, is very, very limited, they read and what they read is tailored to fit their synthetic notion. The greater part, the new part, the important part, is simply pushed aside.

Lenin, however, was deadly serious. Marx and Engels had said “the Commune, that is the dictatorship of the proletariat”. Now Lenin said “the soviets, that is the dictatorship of the proletariat”. Think over that book. In Lenin’s mind there is no longer any fundamental distinction between politics and economics. Politics is concentrated economics but concentrated bourgeois economics. He makes no distinction between the armed workers administering the state and the armed workers administering the economy. Absolutely none. I offer a reward of (fill in to your taste) for anyone who can find the slightest distinction between the two.

But that was only in theory? Absolutely false. In *The Invading Socialist Society* we quoted some key passages where in direct *agitation* he told the masses that everything depended upon their own initiative, their own released powers, substituted for the work of the bureaucrat, the master, the official. And was this “everything”? Food and clothes—no less. In those pages we quoted one passage on the state and then we emphasized that the passage went on to deal with the economy “without a break”. Economics had been taken up into politics. That division was not what it had been in bourgeois society and Lenin put it directly, plainly and simply before the masses. This new conception carried large implications. For the new Universal the party had “disappeared”. Yes, the party had “disappeared”. See the Philistines with their knives out, ready to quote and prove. The asses! Thank heaven for once a citizen can write and develop ideas as Marx and Lenin used to write and develop ideas. Lenin said in 1914, that the Second International was dead. And do you know I have heard Shachtman pontificating how in 1946 it was still very much alive.

The party *had* disappeared. For Lenin not only in pure theory but concretely to the Russian people was saying: *every worker*, “to a man” had to learn to govern the state, and to administer the economy. “Every cook”, “to a man”: “to a man”, the phrase recurs again and again. The armed workers, all the workers, armed, all the workers administering the state, *all* the workers administering the economy. The party as such disappears. For a party which consists of all the workers, farmed, cooks and all, is no longer a party as we know it, the party in bourgeois society. Not even the unions embrace all the workers. Lenin used to point out that it was idle to expect more than about twenty-five per cent of the workers to be organized in unions in bourgeois society.

There are many, many things to be said here. But we can't stay. Two things, however, must be selected.

The first is this. Lenin did not keep his theory in his book or in his head. He went to the masses with it. *The Threatening Catastrophe*, *Will the Bolsheviks Maintain Power?* are concrete State and Revolution. These leninists of our day, the leninists, these leninists. The idea that the workers are not ready, and we must have “ever-higher” transitional slogans, in France today, with war and fascism and stalinism engaged in a deadly grapple for the life of society. And where they play, with “ever-higher” transitional slogans, and carefully measure how much they can afford to tell the workers, they play with the idea that maybe society, at least European society, has entered into permanent decline. Lenin told the workers everything, all he knew, for the crisis demanded it. And if this crisis doesn't demand it, we should stop talking about barbarism. Up to 1917 he had not spoken about “every cook” and “to a man” because he didn't know. Notions are concrete. And he would not create a notion by Imagination. But once he knew, he spoke. That is the first, a little anticipatory, but I could not help it.

The second is more important and flows from the first. This creative initiative, new energy, new force, which alone could replace the old, was not a subjective desire. It was completely objective. *That is what the soviets represented.* If they were not for this purpose, they were nothing more than a historical accident. The appearance of the soviets showed that the new energy was ripe for action. All this shit about nationalized property should be thrown into the sewer where it belongs. The thing chokes us. We can't think. We can't even read. In 1918 when no soviets had appeared anywhere else, Lenin told the Social Democrats: "You say that Russia is not ready for socialism. Then you explain where the soviets came from." All this has disappeared from our thinking. Lenin made the great parallel with the French revolution: it did what it did because of the vast stores of energy it released. The soviets must release the great energies of our period. In a tremendous passage he said that if the soviets were established, then only "the most atrocious violence perpetrated upon the masses" could ever deprive them of their position. The soviets were the revolution, the fact of the soviets. As he said in *The Threatening Catastrophe*, you are afraid of socialism? It is looking at us through every window. It is here. It is not a theory any longer. The opposite. The Other of capitalism is showing itself to us. We can't move except this way. These soviets are it. Trotsky is concretely as far removed from this as stalinism is from leninism. Soviets equals workers' states. Soviets crushed: still workers' state. New programme? Section 5 or 6 or 7 of a long list: revive the soviets. The revolution, what is the revolution? You can plan the economy, put more steel here and less potatoes there. *That* is the revolution. For Christ's sake! For Christ's sake! That is essentially what Stalin is doing. Nobody ever put more steel here and less potatoes there. Not Lenin. Once the soviets had appeared, the proletarian creation, they would appear—leap (4 lines, large print) from everywhere else. All politics now therefore revolved around this leap.

Lenin after 1917

The tragedy of the Russian revolution is that the programme could not be carried out. The glory of leninism—and the *greatest*, incomparably the greatest of all lessons for us, is that never, never for a single moment, did he ever lose sight of the programme. He made tactical compromises, but he kept the programme, the new Universal, concretely before the people. That is why that programme is, for us, the most concrete of guides *today*. But to see that is not easy. It is lost and we have to revive it. Just as the abstract ideas of Lenin's struggle for bourgeois democracy became the concrete struggle for the whole world, so the abstract ideas which Lenin so consciously held up before backward Soviet Russia have become the concrete basis for the most advanced societies of our day. It is from the individual, the concrete, that we get the abstractions which enrich the Notion, and give us that total vision without which we cannot see the object, the reality. We have to hew our way through

to this. We have to hew our way through the wall Trotsky has built between the Russian experience and Western Europe.

Lenin held to the programme, his new Universal. How we have forgotten this! Immediately after the revolution he wrote “The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government”. It is the concrete *State and Revolution*. This hard-boiled, capable administrator, ruthless opponent and master of practical politics, writes a philosophical treatise; the only concession he makes is to begin always from the practical needs, but these are only the occasion. In *The Invading Socialist Society* we quoted from it. It is sufficient to say that he defines the task of the workers as the creation of new “subtle and intricate” relations of labour. Without the creative power of the workers, there would be no socialist revolution. He says so in almost so many words. That is how he saw the task of the government, to *evoke*, to draw out this creative power, to clear out of its way the remnants of the old bourgeois ideology, with its objective basis in the backward society.

The *thing* simply could not make its pressure felt in Russia. It destroyed the feudal order, it crushed the physical bourgeois opposition, it laid the foundation of the Soviet state. But objectively inadequate at the start and later exhausted, physically decimated, it could not go further. By 1918 Lenin was saying: we have done all these things but the administration of the state by the workers, there we have failed. But we must hope for the latter. We must hope that economic improvement will develop the energies of the workers.

In vain. The few workers, in the poverty-stricken country, isolated by the failure of the revolution in Europe, *did not administer the state*. The division between politics and economics came back with renewed force. The turning-point theoretically was the 1920 trade-union discussion. Lenin expressed the crisis with his usual mathematical precision, a precision that could come only from a man who, in true Hegelian fashion, had a clear notion in his head and judged the truth of reality by its relation to the truth of the notion. The workers as workers, he said, must in their unions protect themselves, their *economic* and *cultural* interests, against the workers acting in their party as rulers of the state.

Nothing more profound has ever been said about the Russian revolution. But it could only have been said by the author of *State and Revolution* who had understood what the party meant in bourgeois society, had made the great step after he saw the soviets, and now saw that fatal division opening out again. The crudenesses of Trotsky’s position, the lack of understanding, the danger, can be seen through Lenin’s cautious but repeated warnings to him in this debate: your way will mean the destruction of the dictatorship of the proletariat. The economic and cultural interests of the workers were to be protected *against* the party, for the party was the state. People who in 1948 cannot look back to that debate (*the crucial debate in the whole history of Soviet Russia*), and see the

ominous significance of Lenin's astonishing formulation, these will never be creative marxists. They will always be victims of Imagination.

Under the circumstances the party came back into its bourgeois own. It assumed the domination which was to grow inside and outside Russia. Yes. *Inside and outside Russia*. If the soviets were inherent in the proletariat of 1920, so was the *party* against which the workers would have to be protected. Trotsky erected his wall: all *that* is nationalized property and the workers have power. Distribution is bourgeois, consumption has caused that. A lot of piffle. Lenin worked on the concrete but he had something in his mind that covered the world. The Russian soviets marked a new stage—for the world. What would explode in soviets existed everywhere, though not magnitudinal. We are worse off. We cannot even see them. They are part of world capitalism. They are the Other of the soviets. In general. We shall particularize later and then have a few, a very few pages of Individual concrete.

Lenin had no choice. Objective events were taking their course in backward Russia. But his own pen, the most powerful and influential pen in Russia, never wavered. Every concrete event was made the occasion for propagandizing *State and Revolution*. He could see how backward Russia was. He fought from the base of his new Universal.

In the "Great Beginning", ¹⁰⁹ writing about communist Subbotniks, voluntary work by a few thousand workers on Sunday, he said that he had *always* insisted that the truest essence of the dictatorship of the proletariat was the discipline, the new conception of labour that came from the proletariat and could come from the proletariat alone: socialism was *not* primarily violence against the bourgeoisie. Show me anything like that before 1917. Speech after speech, article after article, dealt with the reality, only to draw the ideal of *State and Revolution*. The statutes for the programme are dotted with "to a man". *He knew that it was not taking place*. But he said: this is what it is *and* this is what it ought to be and he could see it as it was only because he had notional truth in his head. He was measuring always the gap between *State and Revolution* and Russian reality. So it was he saw the first clear view of the fascist state—in Soviet Russia. Rae has pounded out the true significance of his remark in 1922: this state of ours is out of hand. It is going God knows where. In 1921 he saw the New Economic Policy as a means of encouraging *the initiative* of the peasants. Local initiative everywhere he repeated over and over, local initiative. Trotsky not only never wrote this, he wrote the exact opposite. For him now (life is funny) it was *always* the initiative of the party, democracy in the party, etc. etc. Lenin had left *that* behind.

Lenin was never himself during the last eighteen months of his life. But today careful reading of his articles of 1923 show that he never for a moment altered his method. It is impossible to deal in detail with this work here. I shall give a

general summary only, prefacing it by the remark that nine-tenths of Trotsky's writings on this subject are fit only for the furnace.

When Lenin recognized what was happening to the Soviet state he approached the question as always on the two levels, the real and the ideal springing from the real. Trotsky writes and writes and writes about Lenin's plans to reorganize the Workers' Inspection and how he attacked Stalin. I have never seen from him one line on the *significance* of Lenin's article on Cooperation¹¹⁰ which came before the proposals to reorganize the Workers' Inspection. In this article (which Ruth Fischer understands in a vague way) Lenin grappled with the problem of *bureaucracy*. Cover Russia, peasant Russia, with a network of peasant co-operatives. The peasants are not active, they are not administering the state, they are not administering the economy. We have to devise ways and means of making them administer. (That he had to think this way was the weakness.) Co-operation is the way. We are backward, we haven't enough culture to make the state of *State and Revolution*, but if we can get this nationwide co-operative system among the peasants, this would be socialism, as far as we can get. There is something infinitely pathetic and infinitely splendid in the way Lenin, sick, watching the state running away, watching with his realistic vision the vast backwardness of Russia, still digs out of the harsh reality some programme, striving to realize the Universal. That is being a revolutionary.

To discuss Lenin's proposals about sending a few people abroad to study" administration, without this programme for cooperation, is to reduce him to little more than a vulgar bureaucrat. He did not have much hope really. It is, in my opinion, not accidental that in "Better Less but Better"¹¹¹ he writes concrete proposals for improving the Workers' Inspection and then jumps suddenly to a detailed exposition of the world situation and the perspectives of the world revolution. In the last paragraphs he says simply "Can we hold on?" And he makes a reference to peasant backwardness. You have to read this in relation to the programme for a nationwide system of peasant co-operatives. Lenin was not a 14th Street revolutionary who could give you a programme one day and forget it the next. When he writes a programme for nationwide peasant cooperatives and says, this will be all we need for socialism today, it was part of his programme for the struggle against the concrete enemy—bureaucracy.

I have now to take a step which, I announce frankly, it would be difficult to prove conclusively for sceptics. But I have read those last articles of Lenin's till I understand, not only what he wrote, but what was implicit. In the beginning of one of them, "How to Reorganize the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection", he says: This crisis is a crisis like the crisis of the Civil War, in other words, it is the gravest crisis of the Russian revolution. He says then: how did we meet the crisis of the Civil War? We dug deep down into the deepest layers of the

population, to find the most devoted, the most self-sacrificing forces. Then the article seems to fall away from this level. He goes into details about choosing good administrators and training them carefully. But think of Lenin as he had always been. Also let us recall here this very Civil War. In the crisis of the Civil War in his speech to, I think, the Fourth Conference of the Trade Unions, he makes what is the most revolutionary speech I have ever read anywhere. It is possible to read that speech for years and not understand it. On that I can give unimpeachable evidence. At any rate I understand it now. It says approximately this: The revolution is in desperate crisis. The only thing that can save it is you, the workers, organized in your factory committees (the basic organization of the workers). Take over. *Run production*. Run everything. If you take over everything we can win. If you do not take over

Those who read this *may* understand it. That I have leave to doubt. It is very hard, *very, very* hard to realize what this means. So ingrained is the bourgeois habit of thinking in terms of organization, leaders, policies, instructions, discipline: discipline, which is very good medicine for petty-bourgeois radicals but is not needed by the proletariat. But you do not understand Lenin in 1923 unless you understand this uncompromising appeal to the masses *in their factory committees* to take over. In the trade-union discussion he had said: "Rudzutak's thesis is the road for the workers. You, Trotsky, stop organizing the workers. Your task is not to administer. Go and propagandize. Tell them what has been well done, so that they can go and do it." And he would tell them later: you like administration too much, and you have too much self-confidence. You think that *you* and your staffs will yourselves do everything. (Earlier than this he had said the same thing without calling names, this time with an anger that was unusual with him, a reference to the military habits and "bureaucratic conceit" that had been learned in the army.)

That is leninism. That was the crisis of the Civil War and I am convinced that in these last articles the emphasis that Trotsky has given to the attacks on Stalin and the petty measures about the administrators is totally false. Lenin saw these as concrete measures, but at the same time he was planning the big cooperative movement among the peasants—this we know—and he also had in mind *a tremendous appeal in the old leninist manner to the great masses of the workers*—the deepest layers, "as in the great crisis of the Civil War". It is impossible to reconcile leninism with a crisis like the crisis of the Civil War and appointing new people to a body of a few thousand workers' and peasants' inspectors. That is not leninism. If anything, it is trotskyism. Lenin had the authority to attempt it if he had lived. The articles are the outline only of a programme. He wrote on co-operation and left it there. Most, in fact all, of these articles are written between January and April 1923 after which he never wrote again. But there is enough of them for us who understand Lenin to know that in these last days, in face of the great crisis of the Russian state, he had, he could have no other ideas than the mobilization of the great masses, including

the peasants. Who thinks otherwise will one day have the duty of saying so. Trotsky has given pictures of the trade-union discussion, of the crisis of Brest-Litovsk, and of 1923, which teach us not leninism but only his own limitations. We can find *ourselves* only by tearing off this trotskyist veil and seeing the leninist content.

Leninism and Ourselves

Lenin had a notion of socialism. It is noticeable that up to 1905 he thought of socialism always in terms of the Commune. And after 1917 he changed—he changed not for Russia but for the world. We have to do the same. We have not done it. For if we had we would recognize in Lenin's articles and methods in Russia of 1917-23 the greatest possible source of theoretical understanding and insight into *the world of today*. Russia was part of world economy. The party became the state. The proletariat was overcome by the party; all this we have now seen in Europe and are seeing in Asia and in fact everywhere. The economic and cultural interests of the workers *everywhere* are ruthlessly sacrificed by the labour bureaucracies *everywhere*. The thing has reached a stage, unparalleled, unforeseen, un-dreamt-of. How to meet it? *First, first* tear out the pages of the book which say that Russia in 1920-23 has nothing to teach us about workers' struggles under capitalism because the property is not nationalized and Russia in those days was indubitably a workers' state.

No—just as the great marxist in the struggle for bourgeois democracy found a whole complex of principles, ideas, etc., which became the foundation of the Third International and parties in Germany, Britain, France, etc., so in the struggles of 1917-23 in Russia there stands out the basis of the programme of the Fourth International. The idea that we have to wait until a February revolution takes place or an October before Lenin's ideas become *concretely* valid is the complete degradation of dialectical thought. All that he fought for and would not let go of, the creative power of the workers, the initiative of the masses, the new forces, the things that remained an ideal, a banner, an abstract programme in Russia, these today are the concrete notion of programme and policy in Western Europe, the United States and the whole world. The workers will create new forms. Only a hide-bound, conservative, stick-in-the-mud idiot believes that soviets of the Russian type are the last word in proletarian organization. They are no more the last word than the Commune was the last word. We have indicated here and in *The Invading Socialist Society* what the workers seem to think is a party. That is not a point about which it is worthwhile to argue. But everything that Lenin refused to give up in principle between 1917 and 1923, that today is our concrete notion. The workers face the same type of domination by the stalinist parties that the Russian workers of 1917-23 faced, only within the circumstances of bourgeois society. The same transference from Russia that Lenin made for the world in 1917, that same

transference we have to make from Russia of 1917-23 to the world of 1948. The actual, the concrete, should be for us, only a starting point for the boldest and most uncompromising advocacy among the workers of what Lenin wrote from 1917 until 1923. The proletariat of 1948 can understand it. In a very important sense many modern workers can understand it better than many workers in Russia of 1917-23. It was abstract for Russia because of the backwardness of Russia. But Lenin held it up before them always. You cannot move the advanced workers in the CIO by “ever-higher transitional slogans”. Rudzutak’s theses are easier for them to understand. The persons who cannot understand are the leninists who see before their eyes the worker that Lenin saw in 1903. The workers are preparing a

LEAP

LEAP

LEAP

LEAP

And they are going to LEAP from the objective conditions of 1948.

Lenin *with* the nationalized property, *with* the political power, could see no way out for Russia but the concretization of *State and Revolution*, that mighty leap to a higher stage of society. What is the logic that says: we have no nationalized property, we have no workers’ state, and therefore we need not greater efforts, not even equal efforts with Lenin, *but less*. Isn’t this ridiculous? Lenin was ready to mobilize the workers against the workers’ state (i.e. the revolutionary party) because of its bureaucratic deformations.

We tremble to mobilize the workers against the most corrupt, the most hypocritical, and historically the most reactionary organizations in history. The Mensheviks and the stalinists in Germany in 1933 followed a policy which has plunged Europe and the world into a nightmare of barbarism. And yet today, if, admittedly with hindsight, we were to say: the policy in Germany should have been, above all, at all costs, to break up those organizations which led the workers with tied hands to their doom, a chorus of violent protest would arise: from whom? Loudest from the trotskyist “vanguard of the vanguard”. Perish marxism, perish the German proletariat, rather than our doctrines.

Man to man, particularly the revolutionary type, is so unjust that I have to say: I am not saying for one moment that if the trotskyists had put forward such a policy, if they had said “We can save ourselves from fascism only over the broken backs of these bureaucracies”, I am not saying that Hitler would have been defeated. What I am saying is that even if we did not recognize it before, not to recognize it now is a stultification of the revolutionary movement

itself. It means, first of all, that the revolutionary is saying: "Even now that the German defeat has shown its full consequences, *we prefer that defeat to the idea of telling the workers that their main enemy was at home—the bureaucracies—* and that there would be no salvation until the proletariat by its own revolutionary energies destroyed them."

Leninism after the soviets appeared had nothing in common with that. It saw the soviets as an outward manifestation of the inner maturity of the proletariat, of the proletariat in general. Lenin said to Western European revolutionaries: "It will be harder for you at the beginning than it was for us." That means: "Your proletariat will have to overcome greater difficulties. It will have to approach far closer to the ideal of *State and Revolution* than the Russian workers had to." What would he have said if in the face of what has happened since then, the 1948 leninists solemnly pronounced: "We cannot call upon the workers to overthrow what is strangling them. That is syndicalism. We must remember that here there is no nationalized property," there is no leninist party. *Obviously* the workers are not as advanced as the Russian workers of 1917. We have to wage a little revolution with the sliding scale of wages; little by little we put more, i.e. 'ever-higher transitional slogans'."

It is an unsettling sight. But our stomachs must be strong. At least we have learnt this much. Lenin wrote *State and Revolution* and never stepped down an inch from it. But that was thirty years ago. We have our *State and Revolution* to write—*our* Notion. We know the Notion in general. To master the business of Notion-making we have to grasp the Absolute Idea—or *the* method of cognition.

The Universals of 1948

WHAT WE SHALL DO

Let us now examine our status and chart the future progress.

We have ideas of the Notion in general. We have reached where Lenin left off in 1923. We have to find our own Universal of 1948. To do this we have to study the last chapter of Hegel. But we have to do something else. We have to finish off with trotskyism. I propose to do it this way this time: (a) I shall briefly place trotskyism in the logical sequence of revolutionary thought. (b) I shall then analyse trotskyism today in its fundamental dialectical contradictions. (c) Then I shall immediately take up the question of Synthetic Cognition, the cognition of Understanding. When this is done I shall settle down to the Idea of Cognition, the climax of the *Logic*, and our own leap from the heights of leninism. We cannot leap off until trotskyism is dead and buried.

Trotskyism as a system of thought is *not* leninism, and the first thing to be done about trotskyism is to destroy the idea that it assiduously sows that *it* is the leninism of our day. That we have smashed. Leninism was always critical Reason, never Understanding. But trotskyism is not merely an *abortive* leninism. No, sir. It is a development which has leninism incorporated, caught up in it, stored up in it. From leninism, *arrested*, two offshoots sprang: stalinism, which found an objective basis for leninism and so converted it into counter-revolution; and trotskyism which took leninism as Understanding and developed itself as inevitably as leninism did. Thus Understanding based on leninism has taken objective and subjective forms. The one suppresses, stands in the way of revolutionary thought. But trotskyism maintained the traditions of Bolshevism, theoretical irreconcilability with traditional capitalism, and refusal to make any accommodation whatever with the bourgeoisie. It is baffled by the new, not by the old. Where the old political forms are still' valid, as in the United States, trotskyism can still speak, though abstractly enough, for the masses. It is not in the slightest degree accidental that these ideas of ours, which are correct ideas, come out of trotskyism; *as ideas they could have come from nowhere else*. Everything that we learnt and have developed has come out of trotskyism. The revolutionary masses will make this final experience out of stalinism itself, as we have arrived, are arriving, at marxist ideas for our time out of trotskyism. We would not come out of stalinism, or social democracy, or anarchism. Despite every blunder, and we have not spared them, trotskyism was and remains in the truly dialectical sense, the only theoretical revolutionary current since leninism.

We have to take Hegel seriously. You have to read his book to know the full extent of his conception of Understanding as the enemy. But first he says that Understanding in its correct use is necessary, and secondly as we saw in his chapter on the Notion in general, he violently insists that Understanding prepares the way for the flight of Reason. He is very conscious of his debt to Kant, but something far more important is at stake. He says elsewhere that philosophy can only spring up when the established order is breaking up. He has no use whatever for geniuses who pull themselves up by their bootstraps. He insists that you cannot merely condemn a philosophy. You have to trace it dialectically. Lenin, you will see when you read his notes on Hegel, ¹¹² laid great stress on this and condemned marxists for their indiscriminate attacks on previous philosophies. The bond of continuity is the lifeblood of dialectic. Error is the dynamic of truth. We are irreconcilable enemies of trotskyism, but only because we came from there and could have only come from there. Whoever tries to shoo away Trotsky and the Left Opposition and the history of the Fourth betrays thereby a profound philosophical ignorance which is certain to bring dangerous political consequences. One of Trotsky's greatest political weaknesses was his total inability to give a logical, even a coherent account of his differences with Lenin, of Brest-Litovsk, of the trade-union discussion. He

was always defending himself and his record (as a politician of course), and this defence against stalinism was gradually elaborated into a whole political theory which in the end held him by the throat. This being borne in mind, we can now logically finish up for good and all with trotskyism as a political theory.

The Universal of socialism is not nationalized property and plan. The marxist movement did not say this until about 1929. That is the theory of both stalinism and trotskyism. The Universal of socialism is the free proletariat. Any socialist determination must contain this “in principle”. In capitalism the proletariat is continually degraded. That is the general law of capitalist accumulation, it is the historical tendency of capitalist accumulation, i.e. abstract logical law, and the process in life itself as we can observe it. It is no use quoting at this stage. A genuine follower of Trotsky cannot understand this. That Marx established this in Volume I of Capital as his grand conclusion, excluding the market, and purposely confining himself to production, that means nothing to them. The bourgeois thinkers have perpetually concerned themselves with *property* (and for very good reasons): it is the appearance, the very real appearance of bourgeois society. The marxist has always concentrated upon production and the workers in production. The great transformation that is to take place in bourgeois society is the negation of capital by the proletariat, the primary position in the opposition is to be taken by the proletariat, with capital sublated, the proletariat made richer, with the achievements of capital stored up in it. Marxists have not spent these long decades analysing property. An economic order, production, is a relation between people and people. Property is a relation between people and things, and when in the *History of the Russian Revolution* Trotsky says that *property* is a relation among men he is wrong, and very instructively wrong.

Why this blindness? For it is a blindness as complete as if you had bandaged the eyes. Only history will tear off those bandages. But we can *account* for it logically. Trotsky took an individuality, a concrete, an immediate, a moment of socialism, the nationalization of property, and he made it unto a Universal.

This concrete he made into a Universal, thereby creating a Universal of fixed, limited, finite categories. For your genuine trotskyist this is a lot of talk—abstract generalities. But, by persistently sticking to a false Universal, Trotsky has not made merely a theoretical or logical mistake. He has transformed the revolutionary concepts of Lenin into their exact opposite. We have to see this, for once we see this, then trotskyism will trouble us, impede us no longer.

The revolutionary concept of 1917 was, for Lenin, the soviet, and what it meant to the people. Lenin brushed aside nationalized property, confiscation. Not nationalized property, but the soviet plus nationalized property. Socialism was electrification plus the soviet. Lenin too (Lenin the incredible) made it

clear that for him, the bourgeoisie could nationalize and plan. He said it many times. He said too that there were people who were afraid to face this (yes, he said it). But what should be in the text is this: that these remarks were in a speech supporting a resolution which he introduced into a Congress of the Party soon after his return to Russia in April 1917. The speech remains but the resolution is lost. Yes. Lost. And from the speech one can imagine the hard, sharp, bold, uncompromising terms in which Lenin would have formulated these ideas in *resolution form*. And having put that out of his way (it is still in our way) he then went on to *State and Revolution*. I have long believed that a very great revolutionary is a great artist, and that he develops ideas, programmes, etc., as Beethoven develops a movement. So that Lenin never lost sight of his Universal.

But, *in his day*, the *particular* form it took, its determinations, revolved around the transformation of private property into state property. During the revolution it would seem that everybody was agreeing with Lenin, that everybody had *his* concept. Experience of life shows that nothing could be more false. They did not grasp it, these colleagues of his. Hegel knew this, as, indeed, any man who knows the world a little knows. In Observation 3 Hegel writes:

In movement, impulse, and the like, the simplicity of these determinations hides the contradiction from imagination; but this contradiction immediately stands revealed in the determination of relations.¹¹³

Hegel is following there a specific argument, but the general application is more important. Movement, impulse, etc., are the revolution, the transition in action. *Then* the real differences are disguised. Everybody seems to be saying the same thing. But the moment you come to defining the relations when this spontaneous movement is over, all differences appear, and, above all, differences in methods of 'approach. Even during the revolution, or rather the Civil War, you can see the vast differences between Lenin and Trotsky in the differences of their respective books against Kautsky: Lenin, *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*, and *A Contribution to the History of the Question of Dictatorship and the State and Revolution*; Trotsky's *In Defence of Terrorism* contains the basis of everything that he afterwards wrote. And in the trade-union discussion, again the two positions faced each other naked. For these two men, the very term "dictatorship of the proletariat" had different meanings. Trotsky against Kautsky and for the militarization of the unions saw dictatorship as dictatorship over nationalized property. Lenin saw it very precisely as the dictatorship of *the proletariat*. Lenin, the vanguard of the party, was such only because in April 1917 he represented the revolutionary masses. Trotsky's "Lessons of October", with a lot of stuff about all parties being partly conservative and partly revolutionary, and his proposals in 1923 to revive the

party through the youth, all this is a lot of tripe, on a level with his analysis of German Social Democracy. His attack on Zinoviev and in fact the whole *committee* (i) in the *History of the Russian Revolution* for failing to support Lenin in April 1917, (ii) for giving only lip-service to Lenin's ideas a month after, and up to October having the same ideas that they had in April, this attack is a little better, but not much. These men, *the whole committee*, were opposed to the October revolution. Lenin had to threaten them with the fact that he would leave the party with them and go to the sailors. *They had not understood what the soviets represented. They had not understood State and Revolution.* The new forms baffled them. *The masses in action were way out in front of them.* These were the ones who would fall back on the nearest objective basis at the first opportunity. That basis was the particular form, the *nationalized property*.

As soon as the impulse, the movement, i.e. the revolution and the Civil War were over, and it was necessary to "determine relations" in cold blood, the conflict burst out at the trade-union discussion. Trotsky, precisely because he was so independent, self-willed, confident, expressed it boldly. The others appeared to follow Lenin, but by Lenin's death, it was clear that their real basis was Trotsky's basis. Stalin was the leader who saw clearly the objective basis and unscrupulously set out to secure it. The whole 1923 struggle was fought for control of the nationalized property, in its political form of the state, the party. Trotsky never, even in theory, "went to the sailors". He talked about them a lot and to them. But that everything depended upon them, in the way that Lenin thought and *acted*, that never was in his mind. He never opposed the soviet to the nationalized property, the workers to the party. He was in advance of Lenin's committee in that he saw the soviet as a means of making the socialist revolution. There he stopped. But you have to grasp leninism very clearly before you see the immense gap that separated them even in 1920.

That then is the root of trotskyism. Only for the moment, the revolution and the Civil War, did trotskyism and leninism coincide, as they had coincided in 1905, and not before and after. And because *State and Revolution*, and the soviets as socialism looking through the windows of capitalism remained impenetrable for him, he reorganized leninism on a new basis, the *particular forms* in which Lenin's Universal had expressed itself. He had to look at the logical results, logical I repeat, for logic is modified by life.

He taught that only the revolutionary proletariat can nationalize property and plan. This was the concrete situation in Russia, 1917. This fixed, limited, finite, particular determination, he made into a Universal, despite Lenin's warnings. Ignoring that what was specifically proletarian was the soviet and the soviet alone, he sought thereby to elevate the proletariat, to give it what he considered a unique function. Today the events in Yugoslavia have concretely shown that nationalization is not the unique function of the proletariat. By his cramping the Universal into this fixed, limited, category, he had not elevated

but degraded the proletariat, equating it with the bureaucracy. That only the revolutionary proletariat can nationalize has now become its dreadful opposite: only the state property can nationalize the revolutionary proletariat. Absolutely false. It was a mis-reading of Lenin in 1917, a substitution for the Universal of the limited particular determinations of Russia in 1917. The truth is exactly the opposite as thirty years have proved. It is not the plan which will free the proletariat. Only the proletariat can free the plan; otherwise the plan reproduces with intensified murderousness all the evils of value-production.

He taught that nationalized property was the only basis for the development of socialism, i.e. of free humanity. False: a transference to the Universal of the fixed, finite, limited, *particular* determinations of 1917. The truth is the opposite; only free humanity, socialism, can develop nationalized property.

And so from theory to policy.

He taught that the line of division between the revolutionary proletariat and the counter-revolution, i.e. the bureaucracy was property, state property versus private property. Absolutely false. The transient, limited, finite conditions of Russia in 1917 he transformed into a universal law. The true division now, it turns out, was Lenin's: the soviet, the free creative activity of the workers. *That* division remains. When *that* was formally abolished in 1935, with the new constitution, it marked the definitive end. Until that time the soviets existed in *form*, they could be "revived". But their abolition had been carefully prepared for, new cadres educated, new principles instilled, old modes of production regularized; finally all the old cadres physically eliminated. The soviets now have to be recreated. By making the fundamental law of division between proletariat and bureaucracy the form of property, Trotsky sought to dig a gulf which would forever be the axis of mortal struggle. The opposite is the case. This form of property is not a source of division. The truth is the exact opposite. It is the fundamental means of subordinating the proletariat to enslavement by the bureaucracy.

In 1917 the Russian revolution had been made against the concept of national defence and had been preserved by a new concept of national defence which was in reality international defence: the international defence of the interests of the world proletariat, every section of it. Trotsky continued to teach this as concrete identity for 1940. Today the truth is the exact opposite. National defence of Russia is today the preservation of the most powerful and highly-organized enemy the Russian proletariat has ever had, and the fortifying of its satellites, theoretically and practically, thereby paralysing and corrupting the proletariat in every quarter of the globe. National defence of Russia after 1917 was a means of unifying the revolutionary struggle of the world proletariat. Today the truth is the exact opposite. In the conditions of world struggle it is today the surest means of dividing the world proletariat and

pinning down the divisions in subordination to rival imperialisms.

Upon this grave we must pile every stone, for in thought the dead do rise again. The labour bureaucracy of 1917 could be infallibly distinguished by its support of private property and national defence. This finite, limited determination Trotsky transformed into a universal category. The truth is the exact opposite. The most powerful counter-revolutionary force outside Russia is the Cominform. And, as every child knows (at least *most* children) its counter-revolutionary strength is based upon its open, its complete repudiation of national defence of the bourgeois state and its determination (once it feels the Red Army at its back) to destroy private property.

Thus by taking the concrete, particular forms of the revolutionary struggles of 1917 and transforming them into Universals, Trotsky has turned each and every single one of them into their opposite. These laws by which the Fourth operates are laws of confusion, confusion of its own self and of nobody else. In so far as the categories of 1917 contain validity, they are the categories of stalinism. Stalinism at home and abroad has sought and found the objective basis whereby these categories revolutionary in 1917 have become the basis, the chief, the intensified social support of the counter-revolution, as Menshevism became the social support of the counter-revolution in 1914. The first task of trotskyism was to destroy these. Instead it has perpetuated them. *Today.* (1) It does not know whether the Russian bureaucracy is the defender or destroyer of state property or not. (2) It does not know whether the stalinist parties are defenders of private property and the national state (i.e. of bourgeois society in its traditional form) or not.

Trotsky knew and knew wrong. But the official Fourth does not know. It does not try to know. It evades the issue even in its own mind. For to face the issue means the destruction of every rotten plank on which it precariously stands, its feet continually plunging through. It cannot say: not nationalized property, but *State and Revolution* and the soviets. That is Johnsonism. They are wrong. Johnsonism is a quarter of a century older than *State and Revolution*. We are not there any more. Our very methods of arriving at conclusions differ from Lenin's. Not by any accident do we use the dialectic *openly*—not by any accident. But let us go on with it.

Trotskyism: Synthetic Cognition

I said we would do trotskyism first this time and then take up Hegel. The reason you will now see.

In the last section of the *Logic*, Hegel takes up the climax of his system, the Idea of Cognition. Briefly it is for us the elucidation of scientific method, and it is very curious how you can ignore all the World-Spirit business and read the thing as scientific method alone. Let us plunge at once into the three types of Cognition. You should be able to recognize them at once. They are: (a) Analytic Cognition, (b) Synthetic Cognition and (c) The Absolute Idea, or, we may say, Dialectic Cognition, or more precisely, the Cognition of Creative Cognition.

Analytical Cognition Hegel explains as the cognition of sense-perception, things as they are, which Aristotle clarified in the Aristotelian Logic. (And let us pause a moment to interpolate that though Aristotle wrote this codification of common sense Logic—and Hegel praises him highly for doing so—he did not *think* in this way, but was a truly bold speculative philosopher. I have already given the reason for the importance of always remembering this.¹¹⁴)

Analytic Cognition is the cognition of common sense, refined and elevated, but essentially common sense. There is more to it than meets the eye but we can afford to ignore it, once we remember that *all* Cognition contains Analytic Cognition. Synthetic Cognition is the result of the contradictions of Analytic and takes up into it, preserves, sublates Analytic Cognition.

Leibniz laid the ground, the French philosophers of the eighteenth century, the Enlightenment, and Kant in 1781, eight years *before* the French revolution, made the doctrines of the Enlightenment into a philosophical method. This is Synthetic Cognition. It is the Cognition of the revolutionary petty bourgeoisie, historically speaking, and all who do not find completely the new categories in a revolutionary crisis, are to one degree or another victims of Synthetic Cognition. It is the cognition of Understanding and Reflection. Now we have watched trotskyism and Hegel has said so much about Understanding that you would think everything has been said. Not so. His summary of Synthetic Cognition is a summary of trotskyism. I wanted you to get that very clearly, which is why I summarized trotskyism logically. Let us begin with a free interpretation.

Analytic Cognition has identity for the kind of determination it recognizes as its own. It is concerned only with what simply is. Synthetic Cognition tries to form a Notion of the object. That is, it tries to grasp the numerous different thought determinations into which thought can divide the object, and tries to

see them in their unity. For this reason it can be seen that Synthetic Cognition has its goal, its objective. That is necessity, but necessity in general. That is to say, it is aware of the fact that by the thought determinations you can see that the object is moving inevitably in a certain direction, *must* move that way.

Such terms as are connected in this cognition are partly *related* to each other, *but* although they are related, synthetic Cognition keeps them independent and indifferent to one another; and at the same time Synthetic Cognition, while keeping them independent as thought-determinations, ties them together as one in the Notion, in other words, makes these independent parts the Notion. Trotskyism to the life.

Now, in so far as this Cognition passes over from the abstract identity of Analytic Cognition into relating the determinations to each other, that is good. Analytic Cognition sees only this thing here as it is, and that thing over there, Being. Synthetic Cognition *relates* the determinations in the one thing, the thinking process of Reflection. But it is not that type of Reflection in which the Notion of the thing can see itself as Notion, in the determinations of the object. What Synthetic Cognition does is to give the various terms, the thought-determinations, identity. Thus the Universal becomes inner, and mere necessity. Because the Notion does not find itself in the object, it is not subjective, i.e. active, a moving principle and therefore it is not a genuine Notion. Trotskyism to the life again. It does not see the Universal, the Notion in stalinism. The Notion therefore remains inner, in their heads, or in perorations.

Thus although Synthetic Cognition has basic determinations for its content, and in these the Object is inherent, yet these determinations are not looked upon as being essence, movement, they are seen only in their immediate concrete character. Thus the unity of them in the Object does not, cannot contain the Notion as subject. Lenin saw his categories as valid only in so far as they represented the Notion in his head. Trotskyism saw these particular forms, in their immediate being, as *the road, the only road to socialism.*

This method constitutes the finite, fixed nature of this Cognition and therefore it is damned. The Notion is inner, and therefore the determinations are external, leading a life of their own. (We will remember, please, that in life, they live this independent life only when they can find an objective basis.) The Notion as subject, as active, changing, moving, negative principle, is not there, and therefore the peculiar existence that the Notion finds in all objects cannot find an individual concrete form. I stop here to point out that Lenin in 1920 found the concrete notion only because he was looking for it: he found it concretely in the struggle of the workers as unionists against the workers as the state.

We remember that the Universal, when it assumed the form of the particular,

became abstract, and in the Individual both of these as moments, reappeared. In Synthetic Cognition, the abstract universal in this sense does not appear. The purest trotskyism. Only the determinate form, the particular, finds a place; the *individual* part remains something “given”, something from outside which you have to take for granted by itself. Trotskyism again.

In 1905-12 Lenin said that this concrete struggle against the Mensheviks and liberal bourgeoisie, represented by the liquidators, is the struggle for socialism. He says that to give up this struggle for the party means to give up the social criticism of the bourgeois revolution. Remote as was actual socialism, he had the Notion concretely embedded in the struggle. In Trotsky's theory of the permanent revolution, the Universal remained in his head, inner. The bourgeois revolution was something “given”. Nowhere could he say: this, *here*, is the struggle for socialism in the concrete. That is the reason why he could play with the Mensheviks, who denied even the primary role of the proletariat in the bourgeois revolution. In 1920 it was the same. Again he ignored the primary role of the proletariat in the building not of the bourgeois” revolution but this time of socialism itself. He did not stop to seek where the Universal, the Notion was finding its “peculiar entity” in the concrete, the individual. Lenin found it split, partly in the state, which he defended against syndicalism, partly in the proletariat, defending itself against “the bureaucratic deformations” of its own state. Neither was taken as “given”, something strange, peculiar, unforeseen. The Universal was sought in each and the policy shaped to suit. Trotsky might talk about bureaucratic deformations, but for him the defects of the state were unfortunate, just “one of those things”. Just as in 1905 he could not find and isolate and set in opposition the specific determinations where the Universal was in contradiction to the particular, so in 1920 he could not find them either. Synthetic Cognition always has large areas of the Object outside its fundamental categories, areas of which its categories can make no sense.

Synthetic Cognition therefore transforms the objective world into Notions, but it gives these Notions the form of the Notion-determinations, and then has to look for and analyse separately by themselves, “discover”, the individuality of the object. Synthetic Cognition does not itself determine what the determinations are as a truly notional cognition does.

Similarly Synthetic Cognition finds propositions and laws and shows their necessity, but not as a necessity of the casein and for itself. No. The laws it finds are not laws that spring from the Notion. It creates laws from the determinations, the fixed particular in which the Universal happened at one time to find itself. These are in fact appearance, as related to that fundamental essence which is the Universal of the Notion. For us this is a terrible truth. Taking these particular forms in which the universal for a brief period found a determination, Trotsky has drawn from them laws of his own which end by

threatening the foundations of marxism itself.

Analytic Cognition is the first premise of the whole syllogism—the immediate relation of the Notion to the Object. Consequently *identity* is the determination which it recognizes as its own: it is only the apprehension of what is. Synthetic Cognition endeavours to form a Notion of what is, that is, to seize the multiplicity of determinations in their unity. Hence it is the second premise of the syllogism in which terms various as such are related. Its goal is therefore necessity in general. The terms which are connected are partly related, and then, although related, they are also independent and indifferent to one another; and partly they are knit together in the Notion, which is their simple but determinate unity. Now in so far as Synthetic Cognition passes over from abstract identity to relation, or from Being to Reflection, it is not the absolute Reflection of the Notion which the Notion cognizes in its object: the reality which it gives itself is the next stage, namely the identity (already indicated) of various terms as such which consequently is also still inner (and only necessity) and not subjective and existing for itself, and is not yet, therefore, the Notion as such. Consequently although Synthetic Cognition has the Notion-determinations for its content, and the Object is posited in these, yet they are merely *related* to one another or are in *immediate* unity, which unity for this very reason is not that by which the Notion is as Subject. This constitutes the finitude of this Cognition: this real side of the Idea in it still possesses identity as inner; and therefore the determinations of the latter are still external for themselves. It is not as subjectivity, and therefore that peculiar entity which the Notion has in its object still lacks individuality; and it is no longer the abstract but the determinate form (that is, the *particular* element of the Notion) which corresponds to it in the Object, while the individual part of it is still a *given* content. Consequently, although this Cognition transforms the objective world into Notions, it gives it only a form according to the Notion-determinations and must *discover* the Object in its individuality or determinate determinateness; it is not yet itself determinant. Similarly it finds propositions and laws and demonstrates their necessity, but not as a necessity of the case in and for itself (that is, out of the Notion), but of Cognition which progresses along given determinations (the distinctions of appearance) and cognizes for itself the proposition as unity and relation, or cognizes out of appearance the ground of appearance.¹¹⁵

I cannot here do more than refer you to Hegel on the Laws of Appearance, a part of Essence,¹¹⁶ a pregnant section; also to a much more difficult but valuable section on Understanding in the *Phenomenology*¹¹⁷ especially this last for those with a knowledge of physics. I relent, however, a little and quote from Hegel on the Definition, a part of his analysis of what Synthetic Cognition develops into, what it can do, brilliantly, what it cannot do, and *how out of its contradictions* develops the Absolute Idea, which can come from there and nowhere else. Now bearing in mind “nationalized property equals workers’ state”, read this:

But Definition is the first and, as yet, undeveloped Notion. and therefore, when it is required to apprehend the simple determinateness of the object (which apprehension is to be immediate), it can use only one of its immediate so-called properties—a determination of sensible existence or of sensuous representation; its individualization which takes place through abstraction, thus constitutes its simplicity, while for universality and essentiality the Notion is referred to empirical universality, to persistence in changed circumstances, and to reflection, which looks for the Notion-determination in external existence and in sensuous representation where precisely it cannot be found.¹¹⁸

Tell me how better to describe “nationalized property equals socialist universal”. And note how finite into infinite, etc., has at last reached a simple methodological category, definition.

The Absolute Idea

I hope no one is impatient—we are just getting into the thing. Tired? OK—Stop and rest. But no impatience. We have a long way to go yet. We have our own leap to make yet. And that is no slapdash business. But first, before we begin that, we have to master the Absolute Idea and what Hegel means by it. I keep on saying it is the climax of his system. It is that and more. It is the climax of ours too—in thought. Regretfully I have to do a little philosophy with you.

Kant in 1781 had done for thought in its day what leninism had done for the revolutionary movement. And I for one never think of Hegel as a single individual. Kant had made the French revolution into a philosophical method. As Hegel says somewhere in the Introduction to the larger *Logic*, Kant had made Thought the intermediary between *Us* and *Things*. We used *Thought* to find out about *Things*. *Knowing* was in thought so that Being might be discovered in its truth. Engels has summed it up once and for all, despite all that modern philosophers write: the fundamental distinction in philosophy is the primacy of materialism/being, or idealism/knowing. The old Greek philosophers worked through this stage by stage as Greek society developed.

Kant established once and for all the role that Mind, Thought played in the examination of objects. He defined certain categories of thought as permanently in the mind and he said that by these the mind apprehended objects. But Kant kept *thought* separate from the we, the us. There was this process of automatic characterization, there was the thing characterized, and there was “the individual”, the Ego, who (or rather, which), so to speak, was director, custodian, guardian, manager of the process of categorizing.

Now, and this is for us essential, Hegel blasted this *division* to hell. In the

whole *Logic*, he rises to real, sustained anger in only one page, and that is where he taunts Kant and all his followers, asking them to say exactly what this Ego is: he is no sooner in the “Idea of Cognition” than he opens fire. I have got to know the old codger pretty well, and I can sense when something is up. Most of p. 417 and 418 is spent on Kant and the Kantian Ego. Hegel shows where it comes from, its falsity and then bursts out:

Now nothing remains but the phenomenon of the “I think”! which accompanies every idea; and nobody has the slightest notion of this “I think”!—It must certainly be admitted that it is impossible to have the slightest notion of Ego or anything else (the Notion included) if no Notion is formed and a halt is made at the simple, fixed general idea and name.

It is just a lot of talk, as long as there is no Notion.

It is a strange thought (if it is to be called a thought) that Ego must make use of Ego in order to judge about Ego.... .

The thing becomes hilarious.

The Ego which makes use of self-consciousness as a means in order to judge is indeed an x, of which (as also of this relation of making use) it is impossible to have the slightest notion... A stone does not suffer from this... if it is the object of thought or judgment it does not stand in its own way; it is exempted from the trouble of being its own instrument in this operation; something else is outside it which must undertake this burden.

And Hegel, now really mad, goes on: “these ideas, which may be called barbarous”.

He will not have anything between desire, will, impulse, etc., the primitive animal in man, and thought. Without thought there is no man, not a damned thing but another animal. Man thinks or he is nothing—another animal. Marx (from this point of view) will say the same thing: “The proletariat is revolutionary or it is nothing.” The proletariat is revolutionary or it is just another animal.

For Hegel, what distinguished man from the animals was the faculty of thought. So that there was no man, with Ego, which Ego did the thinking. There was an animal which thought, and by this, was animal no longer but

man. And Marx, too, thought in precisely the same way, except that he said: man is an animal which labours. What distinguishes man from the animals is the faculty of labour. (I mention this here so that you should bear it in mind.) Hegel, then, took Kant's categories and said: they just do not "exist" in man's mind. Every basic category represents a stage in the development of man, as man, as a thinking being. The development of the categories is man developing. Thus no great philosophy was "wrong" or "false". It represented the stage man as a thinking being had reached, what was possible at the time. But there was no Ego which remained permanently there, functioning at higher and higher stages. When man reached category P, man was category P, with all the previous categories stored up in him as thinking man. How he based these categories on the objective world, things and the ingenious device whereby he maintained the primacy of thought, while making every thought the result of the impulses of things, that we know.

You see, or you are in a position to see, what this means. There were now only two basic divisions in the Universe, man as thought and Being as the objective world. And the great dialectician joined them together in the Absolute Idea so that they could never be split again. The more one sees into Marx, the more one sees into Hegel, and the more one sees into Hegel, the more one sees into Kant. Marx was always quoting and denouncing and praising Hegel, and Hegel was always quoting and denouncing and praising Kant. The line is continuous. For Kant wrote not only the *Critique of Pure Reason*, he then went on to the *Critique of Practical Reason*. Hegel pounced on him. You have pure reason, pure knowing over here, and practical reason, action, dealing with things, over there. That, he says, is the result of your Synthetic Cognition. To join these you have now to bring in *Will*. Your *will* will try to make the world what *it ought to be*. And with devastating logic, he told Kant: "If the world were as it ought to be, the action of Will would be at an end. The Will itself therefore requires that its End should not be realized." And then, very smugly, for he knows he has Kant where he wants him, he adds: "In these words, a correct expression is given to the *finitude* of will."¹¹⁹ And with that word *finitude*, underlined, Hegel knows that the Kantian will is a corpse.

You will have to read the *Logic* yourself to see how Hegel poses the question dialectically—he was, by the way, in addition to discovering the method, a superb dialectician himself, for *that* demands a special gift—he says, in the first line of the chapter on the Absolute idea:

The Absolute Idea has now turned out to be the identity of the Theoretical and the Practical idea; each of these by itself is one-sided and contains the Idea itself only as a sought Beyond and an unattained goal; each consequently is a synthesis of the tendency, and both contains and does not contain the Idea, and passes from one concept to the other, but, failing to combine the two concepts,

That is where he has been going all the time. Idea and Object, Thought and Being, Man and the Objective World, these are not separate. You remember? The whole thing turns on recognizing that the analysis rests on *Subject* as well as Substance. The logic was to prove just that. And you remember? You had to examine the object and the apparatus by which you tested the object. And the Universal, the Absolute Idea, was merely the apparatus so highly developed, so strenuously refined, that through the particular it found itself in the Individual again. You drew the Universal from the object, and you could see the object only by means of the notional Universal, the Absolute Idea. And now Hegel goes to town:

The idea may be described in many ways. It may be called reason (and this is the proper philosophical signification of reason); subject-object; the unity of the ideal and the real, of the finite and the infinite, of soul and body; the possibility which has its actuality in its own self; that of which the nature can be thought only as existent, etc.[121](#)

He, the man of world-spirit (and he believed in that curious animal, at least he was serious about it), is the same man who now tells us that the Absolute Idea is the method by which subjective and objective are kept as one. This method is irresistible. Get the feeling of this. Through the translation you can sense his emotion:

Accordingly, what must now be considered as method is no more than the movement of the Notion itself, whose nature has already been understood. This meaning, however, is now added, that the Notion is everything and that its movement is the universal and absolute activity, the self-determining and self-realizing movement. Hence the method must be recognized to be universal without restriction, to be a mode both internal and external, and the force which is utterly infinite, which no object can resist in so far as it presents itself as external and as removed from and independent of reason, while also it can neither have a particular nature as against it nor fail to be penetrated by it. The method therefore is both soul and substance, and nothing is either conceived or known in its truth except in so far as it is completely subject to the method; it is the peculiar method of each individual fact because its activity is the Notion.[122](#)

I don't see how I can explain or interpret this to show that every object moves in a dialectical manner, bearing in mind always his clear differentiation

of the grades of objects and the grades of cognition. In fact much of these last chapters is devoted to showing how and why a synthetic cognition is suitable for certain types of sciences and unsuitable for others.

He then, as he unfailingly does, for he knows the enemy, slams a blow at Understanding. He has just said that “each individual fact” must be seen in the light of the Absolute Idea. He goes on:

This is also the truer meaning of its universality: according to the universality of reflection it is merely taken as the method for everything; but according to the universality of the Idea it is both the general manner of cognizing (of the subjectively self-knowing Notion) and also the objective general manner (or rather the substantiality) of things—that is, of Notions, in so far as at first they appear as Others to imagination and reflection.¹²³

Reflection, i.e. Understanding, believes in the Method in general. But when things appear imagination and reflection sees them as *mere* Others. The Absolute Method, however, has or works out a correct Notion and from the start always sees them within that notion, framework. Absolute Idea and concrete are always at a certain precise stage, *each* moving. And here a word of warning. By each individual fact, Hegel means what I may call a serious fact. He knows that the Universal can express itself freely in all ways “independent of variety, external necessity, contingency, caprice, or opinion”, but he adds: “... these must not be taken for anything more than the abstract side of nullity”.¹²⁴ He himself has a very serious meaning for fact but anyone who is not an enemy will understand him.

Hegel now repeats himself, what he has been saying all the time but with richer and richer content. Near the end of the larger *Logic*, Hegel says:

The method is this knowledge itself, and for this knowledge the Notion is not only as object, but as its own peculiar and subjective activity, or the instrument and means of cognitive activity, distinct from it, but as its own peculiar essentiality. In inquiring cognition the method is likewise in the position of a tool, of a means which stands on the subjective side, whereby the method relates itself to the object. In this syllogism the subject is one extreme and the object the other, and by its method the former attaches itself to the latter, but does not therein, for itself, attach itself to itself. The extremes remain distinct because subject, method, and object are not posited as the one identical Notion, and the conclusion consequently is always the formal conclusion; the premise, in which the subject posits the form (as its method) on its own side, is an immediate determination, and consequently contains the determinations of form, of Definition, Classification, and so on, as facts discovered existing in the

subject—as was seen.¹²⁵

Some of it you do not get. But you see this much at least that when trotskyism says socialism over here and the objective world over there, instead of drawing a new Universal from the objective world, it *must* step into *formal* logic and Definition: nationalized property equals workers' state.

But in true cognition the method is not merely a quantity of certain determinations: it is the fact that the Notion is determined in and for itself, and is the mean only because it equally has the significance of objective, so that, in the conclusion, it does not merely achieve an external determinateness through the method, but is posited in its identity with the subjective Notion.

And again. Soak it in:

The essential thing is that the absolute method finds and recognizes in itself the determination of universal. The procedure of common-sense finite cognition here is that it takes up again equally externally from the concrete that which it had left out in the abstractive creation of this universal. The absolute method on the other hand, does not hold the position of external reflection; it draws the determinate element directly from its object itself, since it is the object's immanent principle and soul.¹²⁶

And moving along he repeats some *apparently* old stuff. The old man says his boyhood prayers:

Now this is the stand-point which was referred to above, in which any first term considered in and for itself shows itself to be its own Other. Taken quite generally this determination may be held to mean that what first was immediate is thus mediated and related to an Other or that the universal is as a particular. The second term which has thus arisen is accordingly the negative of the first and (if we allow in advance for the further development) is the first negative. From this negative side the immediate has become submerged in the Other, but the Other is essentially not the empty negative or Nothing, which is commonly taken as the result of the dialectic: it is the Other of the first, the negative of the immediate; it is thus determined as mediated—and altogether contains the determination of the first. The first is thus essentially contained and preserved in the Other. To hold fast the positive in its negative and the content of the presupposition in the result, is the most important part of rational cognition; also only the simplest reflection is needed to furnish conviction of the absolute truth and necessity of this requirement, while with

One brief passage only I need here. Presupposition is not ordinary presupposition. Rather it is Ground, essential movement. And at every new stage, every new result, see what part, and how much of your presupposition is contained in it, for it is *there*. That is the “most important part”. It is. So we can see stalinism, divide it, and pulling ourselves within that split, fight it and fight for socialism. So too we can see trotskyism, not try to push it aside contemptuously, but see it where it came from, what it retains, and put ourselves there to fight it (after the next world conference of Johnson-Forest). No man could see so precisely the concrete point of demarcation as Lenin, and it was because he had *in his head* the most advanced Universal.

You begin with an abstract universal. It particularizes itself. Then:

The Second or negative and mediated determination is at the same time the mediating determination. At first it may be taken as simple determination, but in truth it is a reference or relation; for it is negative—the negative, however, of *the positive*, and includes the latter. It is not therefore the Other of a term to which it is indifferent, for thus it would be neither an Other, nor a' reference or relation; it is the Other in itself, the Other of an Other. It thus includes its own Other, and so is contradiction or the posited dialectic of itself. The first or immediate term is the Notion in *itself*, and therefore is the negative only in *itself*; the dialectic moment with it therefore consists in this, that the *distinction* which it implicitly contains is posited in it. The second term on the other hand is itself the determinate entity, distinction or relation; hence with it the dialectic moment consists in the positing of the *unity* which is contained in it.¹²⁸

Examine the object, work out the fundamental relations. Then drive home, sharpen, the obvious contradictions. Whatever the result know that your presupposition, your Ground, is in it. Don't hold them apart because, as things, sensuous entities, they are apart.

If then the negative, the determinate, the relation of Judgment, and all determinations which fall under this second moment, do not of themselves appear as contradictory and dialectical, this is a mere fault of thought which does not confront its thoughts one with another. For the materials—opposite determinations in one relation—are posited already and are at hand for thought. But formal thought makes identity its law, and allows the contradictory content which lies before it to drop into the sphere of sensuous representation, into space and time, where the contradictory terms are held apart in spatial and temporal juxtaposition and thus come before consciousness

without being in contact.¹²⁹

But the sharpness of the contradiction means, of necessity, negativity:

The negativity which has just been considered is the turning point of the movement of the Notion. It is the simple point of negative self-relation, the innermost source of all activity, of living and spiritual self-movement, the dialectic soul which all truth has in it and through which it alone is truth; for the transcendence of the opposition between the Notion and Reality, and that unity which is the truth, rest upon this subjectivity alone. The second negative, the negative of the negative which we have reached, is this transcendence of the contradiction, but is no more the activity of an external reflection than the contradiction is: it is the innermost and most objective movement of Life and Spirit....¹³⁰

Life and Spirit, being and knowing. Remember too that while there is a fundamental antithesis between capital and labour, this fundamental thesis, antithesis and synthesis move in a series of minor theses, antitheses and syntheses. The labour movement does not make one big leap to a realization of everything inherent in it. We have seen that. Hegel warns us to remember it, warns us too, always to reconstitute our universal at each definitive stage.

This negativity, as self-transcending contradiction, is the reconstitution of the first immediacy, of simple universality; for, immediately, the Other of the Other and the negative of the negative is the positive, identical and universal. If number is applicable, then in the whole course this second immediate is the third term, the first immediate and the mediated being the other terms. But it is also third of a series composed besides of first (or formal) negative and absolute negativity or second negative....¹³¹

Hegel develops this in a manner that is not important for us except that he says: "It is the wholly superficial and external side of the manner of cognition that apprehends this as a unity, and the form of the method as a whole as a triplexity."¹³² Quite. This thesis, antithesis, synthesis is a ruinous simplification.

Here is a comprehensive recapitulation, with additions:

It has been shown that that determinateness which was result is itself a new beginning by virtue of the form of simplicity into which it collapsed; and since this beginning is distinct from its antecedent by precisely this determinateness,

cognition rolls forward from content to content. This progress determines itself, first, in this manner, that it begins from simple determinatenesses and that each subsequent one is richer and more concrete. For the result contains its own beginning, and the development of the beginning has made it the richer by a new determinateness. The universal is the foundation; the progress therefore must not be taken as a flow from Other to Other. In the absolute method the Notion preserves itself in its otherness, and the universal in its particularization, in the Judgment and in reality; it raises to each next stage of determination the whole mass of its antecedent content, and by its dialectical progress not only loses nothing and leaves nothing behind, but carries with it all that it has acquired, enriching and concentrating itself upon itself. This expansion may be regarded as the moment of content, and, in the whole, as the first premise; the universal is communicated to the richness of the content and is immediately contained in it. But the relation also has the second (the negative or dialectic) side. The process of enriching advances along the necessity of the Notion, it is supported by the latter, and each determination is an intro-Reflection. Each new stage of exteriorization (that is, of further determination) is also an interiorization, and greater extension is also higher intensity. The richest consequently is also the most concrete and subjective term, and that which carries itself back into the simplest depth is also the most powerful and comprehensive.¹³³

There follows a most important observation:

In this manner it comes about that each step in the progress of further determination in advancing from the indeterminate beginning is also a rearward approach to it, so that two processes which may at first appear to be different (the regressive confirmation of the beginning and its progressive further determination) coincide and are the same.¹³⁴

Hegel is here pointing to method in thought, but it is also method in objective development. The original conception of socialism receives further and further determinations, but every\one goes further forward and at the same time gets nearer to the original conception. The soviet was nearer to the socialist universal than the Commune, the Communist International nearer than the First and Second. A European international of modern workers who have overcome stalinism would be still closer to the original abstract universal of socialism than anything we have seen so far.

This last chapter is a rising crescendo. To read it and understand it, you must have the past experience in your head. In the end he goes off into World-Spirit for a bit. Let him have his World-Spirit, say I, for in the midst of it he insists that the method is the pure notion. If it is possible to say of marxism that it is the most idealistic of materialisms, it is equally true of Hegel's dialectic that it

is the most materialistic of idealisms.

The Leap

Now for another conspectus of our future. In the light of the Absolute Idea on the one hand and the lowering plateau of leninism on the other we are now in a position to jump off on our own. If ever a leaper was well prepared we are. I propose: (1) to analyse the proletariat; (2) to analyse the bourgeois order *in the light* of the proletariat. These two I propose to do within strictly defined limits. Here, however, I propose to do something else. We have been talking about dialectic and giving examples, handling old material and developing it. But what about an example of how to use the dialectical logic' in a new field? (There is where you have to do your own individual sweating.) To my mind, an essay like this would be incomplete and a cheat unless, logic in hand, it showed how to tackle a new problem. What new problem? The problem of the day is the labour leadership. I propose to make a preliminary (no more than that) study of its dialectical development. There we shall concretely show marxism, i.e. dialectic plus *class*. It is not an appendix. It rises out of all we have been doing and what we face. So, my chick-a-biddies, gird yourselves.

Now we have to tackle the question of the proletariat. (In our investigation the proletariat is the object we have been examining. The proletariat is inseparably linked with capitalist society, true, but we who read this know this. We have done an enormous amount of work on it. I have therefore taken that for granted and shall continue to do so now.) The proletariat. What has distinguished it in its progress from 1848 to the present day? Obviously the series of organizations which have represented it. The First International, "the Second International, the Third. Organization and spontaneity, party and mass. That is the fundamental contradiction of the proletariat as proletariat in capitalist society. The proletariat creates these organizations. These are the Other of *it*. But the capitalist contradiction expresses itself within the proletariat by the corruption of these organizations. For the proletariat, except when expressing itself in impulse, i.e. when actively revolutionary, contains and must contain the concept of the other in itself. That we have seen, is the manner in which each party degenerates.

The party degenerates. But its achievements pass into the new party. These parties represent a series of categories, as close a parallel to the development of the logical categories of Hegel as any concrete object can give. The essential existence of the proletariat is to be found in these organizations. The logical movement of these organizations is the logical movement of the proletariat. In bourgeois society, then, the parties perform the same function for the proletariat in relation to bourgeois society as thought performs for Us in relation to Things. The constant development, the enrichment of the categories,

the enrichment of the Universal at each stage, this is the party in its development. But by means of the party the experience passes into the proletariat. Now really jump off.

The party is the knowing of the proletariat as being. Without the party the proletariat knows nothing. We are here at the climax of a development characteristic of *class* society. The proletariat is the only historical class to which the party, the *political party*, is essential. Before this all political parties were mere approximations. The great slave revolutions of antiquity were mass outbursts of armed slaves. A political party, with a view of the concrete world, programme and policy, that they did not know. Christianity in its early days organized the community, in its most powerful days it was a church, a community that aimed at happiness in the next world. The great revolutions of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries took place through the guilds, the economic and social organizations of the workers. In the seventeenth century in Britain, the petty bourgeoisie simply could not form a party. They were effective through the army. And the bourgeoisie, the bourgeoisie has never found a political party necessary to its existence. The characteristic form of bourgeois political power is the perfection of the state, and for long periods the bourgeoisie has been content and flourished even without control of the state power. The bourgeoisie has no need for a special organization of knowing. Bourgeois society is capitalist production, and by its position as agent of capital, the bourgeoisie automatically is in possession of capitalist knowing, science, art, religion, and the essence of bourgeois politics which is the maintenance of capitalist production. Capitalist production creates its own organs of knowing the capitalist world.

Far different, in fact exactly opposite, is the situation of the proletariat in bourgeois society. The proletariat needs to *know essentially* politics and *revolutionary* politics. The proletariat, says Marx, is revolutionary or it is nothing. The proletariat has no need for organizations to investigate proletarian art, proletarian botany or proletarian fishing. All such things are by-products of the one aim of the proletariat—proletarian politics. The beginning and end of the independent knowing of the proletariat is its *political party*, whereby it investigates what alone concerns it, the reality and the change of its position in bourgeois society. If the proletariat in the course of a hundred years had had other major interests it would have shown them. Apart from its existence as wage-slaves, the proletariat has no history except the history of its political, i.e. revolutionary, organizations. No class in history except the proletariat (and this is *by no means* accidental) has ever openly, boldly, and both theoretically and practically, aimed at the seizure of state power. The history of the theory and practice of this unprecedented phenomenon in human history is the history of the proletarian political party.

Lenin understood this, and would have laughed to scorn the idea that he was

the originator of the “party”. He saw the party as the proletariat’s means of knowing. The struggle of political parties in bourgeois society was the ideal, which the actual struggle of classes would transform into reality. In a series of profoundly philosophical observations between 1907 and 1914 Lenin made it clear that the proletariat could have no knowledge of the relationship of forces in the state, i.e. the existing state of affairs, except through the activity of its political party. The bourgeoisie did not need this. The state, even the tsarist semi-feudal state, existed for, among other special purposes, the acquiring of this knowledge. For the proletariat as an entity in bourgeois society we can say that its knowledge is the knowledge of revolutionary politics, and the revolutionary party is the instrument of that knowledge. The trade union is the elementary organization of the proletariat in defence of its being, its tortured existence as the slave of capital.

Party and masses, knowing and being, objective and subjective. What Lenin is saying is that without the party the proletariat is nothing. We have here a sequence:

Kant: Without human thought there is no cognition.

Hegel: Man without thought is nothing, i.e. an animal. He is man through the faculty of thought.

Marx: Man without labour is an animal. He is man through the faculty of labour.

Marx: Proletarian man is revolutionary or he is nothing.

Lenin (1907-17): Proletarian man politically must have a political party or he is nothing.*

I will not be disturbed by racketeers who cannot see that the CIO is far more party than union.

These are not chance statements. They embody the life-work of some of the greatest thinkers and men of action of the modern age, each representing a stage in social development, and thinkers who all acknowledged the same intellectual tradition.

World War I and the soviets drove Lenin forward from the party, now incorporated into the proletarian consciousness. Today and for years past there is no fear whatever that the proletariat will not form “a party”. The question in 1948 is what kind of party, what is the character of the proletarian party in 1948.

Only the proletariat can answer this. Ever since 1789 every proletarian advance has been made by the proletariat in using its own truly proletarian methods of knowing which is revolutionary activity. The proletarian

revolutions of 1848, the Commune, the political general strike, the 1905 soviets, the 1917 soviets, there the proletarian impulse, the internally necessary, spontaneous activity, this created new forms and new knowledge, to the exhilaration of the proletariat and the consternation of the bourgeoisie. Each step in one country proved the infallible forerunner of similar steps in other countries. We have already quoted Lenin on this, on what he calls the “reason” of the proletariat in revolution. Marx knew this very well. The last paragraph of the 1850 “Instructions to the Communists in Germany” ran as follows:

But they themselves will have to do the most for their final victory by becoming enlightened as to their class interests, by taking up their own independent party position as soon as possible and by not allowing themselves for a single moment to be led astray from the independent organizations of the party of the proletariat by the hypocritical phrases of the democratic petty-bourgeoisie. Their battle-cry must be: the permanent revolution.

Bourgeois society has limited this word “revolutionary”. It is confined to the violent overthrow of bourgeois society. That is not and never was its true meaning. Capitalist *production* is profoundly revolutionary and creative. In a great passage from *The Communist Manifesto*, quoted again in *Capital*, and one which we often quote, Marx unreservedly painted the revolutionary aspects of bourgeois production:

The bourgeoisie cannot exist without continually revolutionizing the instruments of production and thereby the relations of production and all the social relations. Conservation, in an unaltered form, of the old mode of production was, on the contrary the first condition of existence for all earlier industrial classes. Constant revolution in production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones. All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind.¹³⁵

Socialist society would sublate this revolutionary essence of capital and enrich *humanity* with it. Man, by becoming revolutionary, continuously active and creative, would become truly human. The real history of *humanity* would begin. Politics would be replaced by the administration of things. The difference between manual and intellectual labour would vanish. We must remember these phrases. ‘Man would become truly man by the release of his

human function—creative action in labour.

The difference between being and knowing as separate functions would vanish. Man would know only by his creative functions in labour, which embrace both knowing and being. I cannot quote. It is not necessary. But here we reach slam bang up against one of those astonishing parallelisms which show the inherent dialectic in human society. Hegel had followed his system to the end and established the faculty of thought (through his World-Spirit) as the moving principle of the Universe. Under this banner he had linked being and knowing. And he had made thought *free*, creative, revolutionary (but only for a few philosophers). Marxism followed him and established human labour as the moving principle of human society. Under this banner Marx linked being and knowing, and made labour and therefore thought, *free*, creative, revolutionary, for all mankind. Both in their ways abolished the contradiction between being and knowing. Now if the party is the knowing of the proletariat, then the coming of age of the proletariat means the abolition of the party. That is our new Universal, stated in its baldest and most abstract form.

I could have worked up to it more gradually as you will see in a moment. It is necessary to be able to think without being hounded by diehards who don't know the difference between Lenin's party and a party at the Waldorf-Astoria.

The party as we have known it must disappear. It will disappear. It is disappearing. It will disappear as the state will disappear. The whole labouring population becomes the state. *That is the disappearance of the state.* It can have no other meaning. It withers away by *expanding* to such a degree that it is transformed into its opposite. And the party does the same. The state withers away and the party withers away. But for the proletariat the most important, the primary thing is the withering away of the party. For if the party does not wither away, the state never will.

This is *our* Universal—the question of the party. Lenin could only pose it by implication. I repeat. If every cook learnt to govern, if every worker to a man administered the economy of the state, then the party as knowing could not be in opposition to the proletariat as being. If in 1920 the proletariat as being, did not have the tragic necessity of defending itself against the proletariat as knowing, then it would mean that the contradiction between the proletariat as being and knowing had been solved. The greatness of Lenin is that in the harsh realities of Russia, he administered on the basis of reality but never for a moment lost sight of, or let others lose sight of his Universal.

Lenin did not formulate it. He did not do such things. The first congresses of the Communist International, leaning too heavily on the Russian experience, and dealing with the proletariat as it was, laid heavy emphasis on the role of the Communist Party after the revolution. But a quarter of a century has

elapsed since then. What has happened concretely in between? We have had a series of experiences, the significance of which has completely escaped trotskyism.

Let us now examine the bourgeois order with what we have learned from the proletariat.

The distinguishing economic feature of the age has been state capitalism. I do not propose to go into that here. You cannot teach everybody everything every time. It is sufficient to say that upon this basis there has emerged the dominating political conception of our time: *the one-party state*. It is characteristic of Understanding, trotskyism, that it cannot fit these new appearances into its formulae and therefore ignores them.

The one-party state, the very formulation, this popular designation, conceals, as Hegel liked to point out, a profound truth of our time.

And here let me pause for a moment and clear some synthetic rubbish out of the way. By and large the public has derided our simple-minded repetition of the truth that under Lenin there was democracy in the party and our truly synthetic deduction that under a truly Bolshevik Party there would be democracy again. The public is right to scoff. It is no answer at all. Lenin did not treat these questions this way. *State and Revolution* leapt ahead. It did not promise merely to do right what the Mensheviks had done wrong. To the first congress of the Communist International he presented the popularly-phrased but profound theses on bourgeois democracy. That is what is required now.

We explain endlessly: fascism is bonapartism. Fascism is the petty bourgeoisie organized by capitalism. The old categories. What distinguishes fascism from bonapartism is *the party*. Neither of the bonapartists had a party. Today, then, at the very end of its existence, the bourgeoisie finds a party absolutely necessary to it. Its own essential political form, the monster state, can only exist by means of the mass party. Hence the one-party state.

Hitler elevated his party *above the state*. That is very clear from his speeches and his actions.»Each contains the other in his own concept. If in bourgeois society at the moment that the proletariat ceases to act according to its own nature, i.e. revolutionary activity, the party at once succumbs to the penetration of capital, the bourgeois order also is penetrated by the socialization, the inherent proletarianization of society. The gigantic mass Nazi party is the bourgeois capitulation to the invading socialist society. As we pointed out in *The Invading Socialist Society* state capitalism produces the social and psychological needs whereby the population is seized with the revolutionary desire to take hold of the state itself. Both the Bonapartes gave opportunities to capital and bureaucrats. Hitlerism did more. It proposed to

give the administration of the state to the people. But being bourgeois, and with the bourgeoisie in a period of decline, the only functions it would give them were the functions of police. The great necessity of the bourgeois state was the 'suppression of the proletariat and all revolutionary activity.' The party carried out this function. Every Nazi was an armed warden over the workers and all opposition. But the party performed another function. Within the suppressed class struggle it *mobilized* "the nation". Much of the great effort of Germany in the war was due to this. Not by an accident did the Minister of the Secret Police, the Minister of Propaganda and the Party Organizer become the most powerful men in the state. They represented the special functions of the party. I can here only indicate for future consideration the central idea binding all this. *The one-party state is the bourgeois attempt to respond to the contemporary necessity for the fusion and transcendence of nation, class, party, state.* The concrete bourgeois result is the intensification of every evil feature inherent in them. That is what is new. To call this Bonapartism is to put on blinkers. Nobody listens, because nobody is interested in that.

It is impossible here to write theses. Theses are the result of much discussion, historical analyses, etc. We with our eyes open at last can just indicate some paths.

The bourgeois mass party is not a political party in the sense that the party of the proletariat is. It suppresses politics.

It is not an organization of bourgeois knowing. Like the trade union it is a defence and a primitive defence of bourgeois being.

It comes into existence at the moment that it is clear that the next stage for the proletariat is the transcendence of the old political organizations of the proletariat which were and could not be anything else but adaptations of proletarian, i.e. revolutionary, impulse to bourgeois society. In that sense the radical democrats are absolutely right when they say that communism produced fascism. Calling them cowards or renegades convinces them not at all and is ignored by the conscious elements of the proletariat. What is required is the strenuous explanation of the new stage of capitalist production and the economic, social and psychological roots of these mass parties, upheavals from the shaken depths of modern society.

Finally the violence of the bourgeois counter-offensive in the shape of the one-party state warns the proletariat. The party as we have known it is now outmoded. It achieved its highest results where the bourgeoisie had no party, in Russia. We saw the far-sighted Marx send the remnants of the First International to America for he knew what would happen to it. We have seen the corruption of the Second International and of the Third. The petty bourgeoisie as we have seen in France, first in the Mouvement Républicain

Populaire and then in the De Gaulle rally, has read the signs of the times and responds to them with impulses of astonishing-breadth, depth and speed. It tried the old parliamentary form once more in the Mouvement Républicain Populaire, rejected it and, using the parliamentary scheme, is now mobilized to form the one-party state. The De Gaulle rhetoric became a party before even the French people could see that it was coming. The analysis of this is modern theory, not futile repetitions about bonapartism.

What then must be the proletarian response, is not what is in our heads but what is immanent in the objective development.

Bourgeois society has taken over the specific creation of the proletariat, the political party. The petty bourgeoisie has taken over the proletarian impulse. Both of these adaptations are corrupted practically at birth. De Gaulle dare not indulge even in the radical mouthings of Hitler's National Socialist Workers' Party of Germany.

Not abstract logic but the vicious offensive and adaptation to objective necessity of the opposing classes compels the proletariat to find once and for all its own native proletarian mode of being. That mode of being is impulse—the permanent revolution. I have written in vain if it is not clear that objective necessity compels the proletariat to make permanent the great creative impulses from 1848 to 1917. Gabriel will shout, as he shouted at Muniz: "Your policy then is the revolution." Yes, in general, and I note without mirth that now in France they are saying: everything depends on the spontaneity of the resistance of the workers to De Gaulle. In other words all the strenuous programmes and politics of 1944-48 have gone up in smoke and now these comrades belatedly turn to the workers and say: "Make the revolution or De Gaulle will impose fascism."

But the proletariat will not listen to them. They have not the faintest idea how to speak, or how to look. For since 1933 the proletariat has been trying to abolish the old party. It has, in Lenin's phrase, "sensed" what is required. In France in 1936 it went into the factories and joined the unions. four millions in three months. It was gathering itself for the revolution. In 1944 we have the mass mobilizations inside the Communist Party in France and Italy, and the solidarity in the unions under stalinist leadership. The CIO is no union. It is the American tentative approximation at a mass party. Contrary to 10 August 1792, or October 1917, the Spanish revolution even at the late stage of 1936 was pure and simple impulse. So that the proletariat, with all due respect to Gabriel, knows where impulse should be restrained within preparatory limits, and when it should be profoundly revolutionary, i.e. sweep away bourgeois society. *Finally*, the resistance movements, particularly in Poland, demonstrate that the creative capacity of the proletariat is higher than ever it was, that today it thinks in terms of mass mobilization. The Germans suddenly stage the

greatest mass demonstration Germany has known for a century. The joining of the Communist Party in such numbers in France in appearance amounts to "following" stalinism. In essence it is a form of mass mobilization, a degree of impulse.

Lenin wrote *State and Revolution*. His task was to clarify the theory of the state and the relation of the workers to the state—the idea of the workers' state. From this Universal he drew his determination of the concrete relations.

That is not, cannot be our task today. Spain shows that the workers know this, have been taught it by capitalism. The stay-in strikes in another way demonstrate this. The one-party state, the actions of the petty bourgeoisie show this. After Nazism no German worker needs a line from Shachtman to tell him what is required after a seizure of power in Germany.

We are beyond *State and Revolution*. I can summarize where we are in the phrase: *The Party and Revolution*. That is our leap. That is our new Universal—the abolition of the distinction between party and mass. In the advanced countries we are not far from it in actuality. When we wrote in *The Invading Socialist Society* that in ten years the population would be totally reeducated and made truly social (but this only through its own efforts), we were saying just that. But whatever the distance between Idea and Actuality, and it is never very great, because the Idea always comes from some actuality, we get this concept of the relation of party and mass into our heads or we remain on the outskirts of politics. This is the meaning of a Universal. This is the Absolute Idea, the concrete embodiment in thought of subject and object, of ideal and real, of politics and economics, of organization and spontaneity, of party and mass. Every cook, every worker, to a man, to administer the state and run the economy: that was 1917. Today every cook, every worker, to a man, to join the party, the revolutionary party, which today, not tomorrow, not after the revolution, but today will in its own ranks begin the destruction of the bureaucracy. If the gap between Universal and Actuality is as great as it was in Russia 1917 (it is most certainly not that), the theoretical necessity remains. Without it the fate of a contemporary revolutionary group is sealed. It will never escape the particular determinations of leninism, and will thereby lose the creative Reason which animated that high point of human thought and action, still, and shamefully, so far above us.*

I mention here my expectation that in the United States the party will be the CIO politically transformed. The organization may very rapidly be the union movement itself, drawing in the communities around it, and functioning as a union and with different personnel or in a different formation, politically. But this is not important. The proletariat will decide. The thing is to tell the proletariat to decide.

Dialectic in Action

The bureaucratic caste is murdering the revolution and pushing society deeper and deeper into barbarism. To analyse this is a task that has never even been attempted by our movement. They take the case as it comes. To isolate it, look at it, examine it, restore it to its environment, trace its movement on a world scale, that is not even thought of.

Trotsky never even *saw* it as it was. He could propose going into Social Democracy to split off a section and thus create the leninist party. What a misunderstanding of the party, and of the proletariat, and of 1934, were contained in that purely subjective proposal! I repeat: he never saw them at all. A Synthetic Cognition has notion-determinations, you remember, but after having fitted the object (as much of it as will go) into these, it then has to “*discover* the Object in its individuality or determinate determinations”. The individual, the concrete, is “given”. Where “that” comes from is anybody’s guess. You can write voluminously for twenty years and never “discover” the object. In politically backward America where the Norman Thomas party was an incipient formation of the same generic type as the early Russian parties (when they *began*) the policy of entering the social democracy could have some effect. It was 1900 all over again. Elsewhere it was a total failure and disrupted the movement just when it needed above all to do the work that Lenin did in 1914-17, to find out what had happened to the labour movement and where in the concrete were the elements of the new. If today the movement has a feeling of historical impatience and a feeling that all will be lost unless..., then it learned this from Trotsky’s method. This task now faces us.

What We Propose to Do: as Marxists

We must begin by an abstraction, observing bureaucratic stranglers of the proletariat as they appear from the earliest appearance and trace their historical development. Everything we know and have learned comes into play here. First we are marxists. Hegel can speak of contradiction in general. For us the decisive opposition in society is the opposition of *class*. It is necessary to remember too in this attempt at a real cognition, that only the end will prove the beginning. And therefore right here at the beginning I say that such a phenomenon as these bureaucratic assassins of the revolution can have, must have a *class* basis, and that class is the petty bourgeoisie.

In Russia where the proletarian revolution had destroyed the bourgeoisie this petty-bourgeois formation assumed the role of the bourgeoisie in lieu of the defaulting proletariat. But these people came from bourgeois society and have developed in bourgeois society. They come not from socialism in a single country but from capitalism in all countries. They are the product not of the

policies of the Kremlin but of the politics of the world market. These bastards will say, “Of course! Of course!” and then go straight back to the “tools of the Kremlin”.

We need also one other elementary assumption. The petty bourgeoisie has undergone *changes*: today as the centralization of capital and the socialization of labour have reached the point Marx says is incompatible with the capitalist integument, the petty bourgeoisie, like everything else in capitalist society, has been completely transformed. But however transformed, it still remains always between capital and the workers. This is our marxist basis, the fundamental situation of the .class in bourgeois society and the transformations it undergoes within that general relation.

As marxists also, we have to trace the social essence, ideology, politics and social personality, etc., of the bureaucratic caste in strict co-relation with the development of the class. It has developed with the development of classes.

What We Propose to Do: as Students of the Logic

But we have been learning something, studying the *Logic*. It is difficult enough to use it on familiar ground. But we must use it on unfamiliar ground. That is one of the most deplorable features of our movement. It studies theory as theory, something in a book, and then back to practice, in the hands of the practical men. We have consistently refused to do that. We have refused to separate the theory from the concrete struggle. We say that apart from each other neither the theory nor the practice has any meaning, or rather *both* become Understanding.

This object, the bureaucratic caste, has a historical development of its own. For if you say it may wreck human civilization and is responsible for the present barbarism, as it is, but it is something which appeared within the last generation and is to be accounted for empirically (tools of the Kremlin) then that is the end of science. Such huge effects *cannot* be result of trivial causes. “We would not be in danger of total collapse of civilization, *if* the revolution had not taken place in a backward country first, *which* created a bureaucracy *that* was able to corrupt the revolutionary leaders abroad, and so ruined everything.” You never stay there. You end by formally destroying marxism as you have already destroyed it in content. No, we are going to find the logical movement of this caste in its historical development. We shall find the general logical characteristics of the dialectic in it, in this precise object and no other.

We shall have to extract its logical laws from it, in its own historical development. That is not an easy thing to do, neither nature nor history presents us with the logical forms in their purity. Long periods of stagnation intervene—centuries, always decades. We have to co-relate logic and history.

We have to search and find the specific categories, the specific finite and infinite. If you jump at it abstractly, then you will be betrayed as sure as day. The Notion “draws the determinate elements directly from its object itself, since it is the object’s immanent principle and soul.” The logical movement is the “objective general manner (or rather the substantiality) of things.”

Just as I have had to take for granted all through our knowledge of the objective development of capital and labour in treating the labour movement, so here, in dealing with the leadership, the bureaucratic murder-caste of the proletarian revolution, I have to take the specific developments of the labour movement for granted. But I shall constantly refer in passing to what we know, and I shall not hesitate to develop certain points and leave out others. I know more or less what the people I am writing for know and what they don’t.

(Why so solemn? Simply because I have seen a thousand times how people believe that they have grasped a method and use the terms but go on just as they were going before.) Trotsky’s writings are full of dialectic and contradiction and the whole paraphernalia as one could wish. Yet many millions of common people, millions would have laughed to scorn his predictions about the behaviour of the stalinist parties and the stalinist bureaucracy. And they would have been right and he wrong. (Furthermore. Most of you who are reading have some writing and some serious writing in view.) The specific dialectic of American politics remains a closed book, well, then largely a closed book (a vile phrase). In literature, particularly American literature, all the work has to be done; new, uncharted fields. Let us then know precisely what we are doing and “strive” for “quite simple insight”. You will have to do exactly what I am doing here. When Trotsky in *Whither England* said that the British comrades had to study the Puritan Revolution of 1640-49 and Chartism he was absolutely correct. I myself am accustomed to spend hours and hours rapidly covering and seeking the logical movement over centuries of histories. We did it with the Negro in America from before 1776, over one hundred and fifty years. But to write it down is something else. (Finally, it is not an abstract essay. It leads us into practice—practical politics.)

The French Revolution in Historical Logic

The origin, the primary abstract elementary Universal of these organizations, is to be found in the French revolution. Yes, precisely there and nowhere else. “They “received” their Universal *there* and they had to. At any great turning-point, transition, in the history of an object, *all* the future developments until the next major turning-point are outlined. That is why the history of the Civil War in the United States is imperative for the American revolution today; and the Puritan revolution and the crisis of 1832, the Reform Bill, imperative for the revolution in Britain. *All* the trends appear like in a vision, a blinding flash,

then there is a settling down and they work themselves out. You see that in history, you see it in life, and you see it in the *Logic*, when each doctrine reaches the turning point to the new.

Here, however, we separate ourselves, our regular practice from Hegel. He develops his contradictions logically. For us the contradictions in society are the result of material changes in the function, size and social weight of the class. This again depends upon technological development within the world market. This is the blinding flash of 1920 in which all the perspectives of production, the proletariat and the party and the state open up and illuminate the future of the whole world. Lenin's programme remains only an ideal for the proletariat, which is too weak. By today it is the programme for the proletariat of the United States, Britain, France, etc., for the US proletariat above all. It is twenty-five years later, the whole world struggle has moved on, the classes are more mature.

The French revolution is one of those turning points. It was so complete because the classes untrained, unpoliticized, fought the class struggle out instinctively, each class improvising as historical necessity demanded. The logic of the movement of classes is complete. That is why France is the model for other nations. The French revolution was a far more complete, thorough and characteristic bourgeois revolution than the Russian was a socialist revolution.

We Must Begin at the Beginning

So far so good. But I postulated the petty bourgeoisie, and the first historical emergence of the revolutionary petty bourgeoisie in bourgeois society is *not* in the French revolution. The petty bourgeoisie carried through the British revolution one hundred and fifty years before. And if you do not start there, examine it there, then the whole analysis is thrown out of gear, the whole analysis of three hundred years of history. You will not have to wait long for the proof of this.

The petty bourgeoisie had appeared in the English revolution of 1640-49. It was a petty bourgeoisie consisting mainly of independent farmers and artisans, the classic petty bourgeoisie of capitalist society. It could form no party. It was Puritan and the form of democracy with which it began was the democratic church. But the Civil War gave it an opportunity for organization in the army and after a few years of war it formulated its proposals for democracy. It is what I propose to call an *Ideality*, it was never carried out at all. But it is one of the most remarkable documents in history and as soon as you read it you realize that a class is here speaking for centuries to come.

All power comes from the public.

The foundation of government is the free choice of parliamentary representatives.

The House of Commons must be supreme.

Parliaments must be biennial.

They are to be elected by manhood suffrage.

These revolutionists did not dare openly to repudiate the Crown and the House of Lords but the implication of them as superfluous is clear in the proposals.

In discussions with Cromwell, those who presented this document challenged the property system, which they claimed was the real obstacle to this programme. Thus the democratic regime, and within it the economic opposition which will ultimately overwhelm it and absorb it, is fully established. It is an Ideality, but there are idealities and idealities. This is not the writing and theory of men like Lilburne, the democrat. This is the army, the most powerful force in the country. At a certain stage it seizes the King's person and negotiates with King, with Parliament and with Cromwell. It has learnt this theory and this practice in eight years of revolution. The miserable Shachtmanites and their type don't believe that the modern proletariat can learn anything unless it is taught as you teach children.

Democracy therefore is not the creation of the French revolution, but of the British petty bourgeoisie, the petty bourgeoisie of radical small farmers and artisans. Out of this crisis, the violent clash of classes, emerges this ideality. To this day it has not been in essence superseded as a conception of democracy.

We rigidly exclude Cromwell's dictatorship (but sadly and with some misgivings). We rigidly exclude the "proletarian" embryo, the Diggers and Levellers. All we need to say about them is: *they offered no serious threat to the party of the army*. The petty bourgeoisie, independent farmers and independent artisans, were the organized revolutionary political power and they would go so far in front because they were not threatened from behind.

We now have to establish what happened to this programme. It remained dormant in Britain for two hundred years until the Chartists took it up in the eighteen-thirties. The only class that could carry it fully into effect was the proletariat but the proletariat inevitably associated this programme with socialism and the proletarian revolution. Thus the pure democracy transforms itself into, is caught up and stored up in socialism. But the emergence of the contradiction of the opposition within it is dependent upon the social weight and reciprocal relations of classes. There, regrettably, I have to leave that.

But we are dealing with the leadership. I shall not say much about this, merely indicate. It is *practically anonymous*. We know the names of the men. Some of them are officers. But what is characteristic of them is that they are lost in the army. The relationship between them and their followers is organic. There is not the slightest element of caste. They are officers but they are members of committees appointed to deal with the concrete problems of the army, that's all. To solve these they draw up the proposals and discuss them with Cromwell, who respects them. But he later suppresses the insurgent elements by force.

Let us now sum up in logical terms. The dialectic of bourgeois democracy is posed here. It is a superb programme and the incurable empiricists will have to explain how three hundred years ago there appears this programme, precise and put forward as a practical proposition. But first the class is too small and secondly it means the destruction of bourgeois property. Both sides to the debate recognize that. So that pure democracy in bourgeois society carries within it an immediate conflict with bourgeois property. The programme was no accident and why it was not carried out is no accident either. (The debate took place between the revolutionaries.) That is the Universal and its Other. It is in this way that you establish a historical Universal. (I wish we were just beginning and we could write a whole book on this.)

Past Ideality and Concrete Reality in the French Revolution

The next phase of illumination of the petty bourgeoisie is during the French revolution. We must always examine the class carefully, i.e. concretely. *The independent yeoman farmers and artisans are no longer the characteristic elements of the class.* We have not independent farmers as in Britain, but for historical reasons a mass of oppressed feudal serfs and would-be peasants. The artisans have grown immensely and there is crystallized out of them a class of small masters. *The new addition is the intelligentsia, a body of professional men, lawyers, doctors, technical, scientific, literary, journalistic and clerical.* This new element within the class will form the natural leaders of the petty bourgeoisie and of the bourgeois revolution.

Nature and society do not as a rule present the logical forms in their purity but in revolutions society does a remarkable job. Democracy, the ideality of the British petty bourgeoisie, was concretely realized by this caste at the *very* beginning of the French revolution. *Its* ideality therefore was not and could not have been democracy. What was contained in democracy as Other, its ideality, would have to emerge as the revolution developed. Democracy, true democracy, is never superseded. It is the first thing that a revolution establishes.

Right at the beginning of the French revolution, *the democratic revolution was*

established. The revolution in thousands upon thousands of municipalities, local towns, established in essence the democratic regime. Thus the premise for the ideal of parliamentary democracy which had leapt out in 1649 assumed concrete form.

The Embryonic Proletariat

But the petty bourgeoisie of 1789, unlike that of 1649, has an Achilles heel. Developing bourgeois society creates a developing proletariat. This petty bourgeoisie of 1789 has in its rear what the specific petty bourgeoisie of 1649 did not have—a revolutionary force capable of *independent mass action*. It began the revolution on 14 July and repeatedly showed that it and the peasants were the main motive force of the bourgeois revolution.

The petty-bourgeois leadership has no independent development. Step by step the masses drive it on and its ideality emerges. It is not democracy at all. It is a compromise between bourgeois society, capitalist production, and socialism, the independent action of the masses. I have to exclude detail and move to the conclusion. *The petty bourgeoisie caught between the reaction and the embryonic proletariat had to use the revolutionary socialistic masses against the bourgeoisie in order to establish bourgeois society.* Its Other, contained in it, we can establish at once. It is this petty-bourgeois class in general in a different historical setting which will again, in deadly crisis, use the revolutionary masses in order to preserve bourgeois society. Thus the petty bourgeoisie, caught between the two classes, is transformed into its opposite, from the progressive revolutionary dictatorship of Robespierre to the counter-revolutionary dictatorship of stalinism, and I do not mean stalinism in Russia. It is precisely the fundamental elements of this in general that we have to establish in the *French revolution*, yes, ladies and gentlemen, in the French revolution.

The *sans-culottes* had incorporated the 1649 democracy in themselves. This programme, you remember, had been the product of the concrete situation; The concrete, the concrete, the despised concrete, the concrete where is contained the possibility of truth through error making itself its own result. The *sans-culottes* as the revolution progressed wanted some very concrete things. They wanted, not a lot of democratic abstractions, they wanted land to the peasants, full control by the state, wage control, control of distribution by the state and limitation of income by the state, confiscation of the property of monopolists and enemies of the people by the state. We have a name for this today. It is state capitalism.

As clearly as the full democratic regime came out in 1649, to disappear for decades, the state-capitalistic regime appeared as the highest peak of the revolutionary petty bourgeoisie in its organic position between the proletariat

and bourgeoisie. I have been compelled to exclude Cromwell's dictatorship. We have to limit ourselves. I cannot go into the dialectic of the relationship between the programme of democracy and Cromwell's dictatorship and the actual realization of the petty-bourgeois state-capitalist dictatorship.

It was not only that the masses wanted these things. Robespierre and Saint-Just had to satisfy them. That is why they were able to reach power, that is why they fell. But they made the most desperate attempt at stabilization of production that Europe was to see until World War I. There need be no fear of this. The evidence is overwhelming and it increases, though it is enough already to stuff and fill the wide mouths which will be braying, "Hee-haw! State capitalism in the French revolution now." It came and it disappeared. *But while it lasted it saved the French revolution.*

It was embarked upon under the impulse of the masses and the doggedness of the counter-revolution. So far in general. But it had a condition. *That condition was the complete subordination of the mass movement to the dictatorship.*

The petty-bourgeois dictatorship did *not* demand the cessation of revolutionary activity. Nothing of the kind. It demanded that the dictatorship should say how, when, why, and to what degree this activity should be carried on. This dictatorship cannot suppress the mass movement. If it does that it is lost. It must *use* the movement. This is the essence of the politics of the petty-bourgeois caste leading the revolution. It is, you will already have noted, the essence of stalinism.

State capitalism today poses the question of questions, the dictatorship of the state in all spheres, i.e. the dictatorship of capital or the dictatorship of the masses as the state. This is the social root of state capitalism. It stands out in the French revolution as it does not stand out again for nearly one hundred and fifty years. *The masses wanted to carry out this programme themselves.* Price control and searching of warehouses for hoarded goods, detection of traitors, *final decision on all laws, that* they wished to carry out themselves because the dictatorship continually vacillated. They wanted to carry it out by means of the districts, the sections, the popular societies, the all-embracing organizations of the masses. The activity, the spontaneity, the self-mobilization of these masses was beyond all imagination. *They wanted to become the state.* The state itself, the parliament, was to be no more than the executive committee of the masses. This must be clear. This is what drove the petty-bourgeois dictatorship on. Robespierre and Co. had to *act* for the masses. The masses wanted to *act* for themselves, to have both veto and executive power. They saw themselves as a kind of gigantic soviet. They said *they* were the sovereign power, in theory and in fact. Marx said that the real leaders of the revolutionary movement were men like Varlet and Roux, not Robespierre and the others. The enmity between them was to the death. We have been as usual misled by theories in books. All

honour to Babeuf, but the great lesson of the French revolution is the revolutionary mass movement itself, not what Babeuf wrote.

We must particularize here. The revolutionary leadership was triple. The genuine mass leaders were people like Varlet and Roux, the *sans-culottes*. The petty-bourgeois leaders were the chiefs of the Paris Commune and they led the great revolt of 10 August 1792. They were chiefly Hébertists. Both of them had their counterparts in many parts of the country. The official leadership in the Convention at the height of the Revolution was the petty-bourgeois national leadership of the Robespierrists. The Robespierrists finally acted only under the impetus of the Hébertists who acted under the revolutionary pressure of the *sans-culottes*.

The Robespierrists acted but they murdered, imprisoned, tortured, framed Hébertists and *sans-culottes*. This too shows the historical origins of what we know as stalinism. (Classic Menshevism was not this, because classic Menshevism did not originate from a revolutionary period.) But the real importance of the dictatorship of Robespierre is that for a few months it represented more than any other tendency a *national compromise*. It was the furthest the petty bourgeoisie could go without destroying itself by destroying bourgeois society. But it had to go this far or the masses would have destroyed it.

Thus in the fundamental economic and political relations the stalinist parties of today are the counter-revolutionary reality of the ideality established by the revolutionary petty bourgeoisie. An attempt will be made to make the historical development from the revolutionary dictatorship of Robespierre to the fascist dictatorship. (As soon as you give Understanding some ideas straightway, without thinking, it tries to use them against you.) But fascism is not this, because fascism is a mobilization of the petty bourgeoisie to destroy the proletariat as a revolutionary force. Robespierre did not attempt to do that. He rested on, depended upon, the "proletarian" power. He was revolutionary precisely because he led the revolutionary class. The fascistic are in the French revolution too, but that we exclude.

But not only is the petty-bourgeois ideality in the actual economic and social contradictions and achievements of the dictatorship. The derivative features are essentially historical antecedents of stalinism. The very theory of the revolutionary petty bourgeoisie shows the historical origins of stalinism. The theoretician of the French revolution was not Babeuf, but Marat. Marat from the start wanted a dictatorship, a ruthless dictatorship that would forcibly remove all obstacles to the establishment of "liberty", i.e. bourgeois society, but which the people would obey unquestioningly. If they did not, they would be disciplined. The "action committee"—honest, genuine ones, acting under the government, that was Marat's ideal.

Finally, Robespierre and the dictatorship attempted, within their conditions, to install the one-party state, in the bourgeois sense. Step by step the Jacobins were purged, the Convention was purged (in fact, the masses did this) until there was one continuous development from Robespierre in the Committee of Public Safety dominating the Convention, to the Jacobin Club. The Club in the days of the Robespierrist dictatorship was a nationwide organization with its centre in Paris. Its chief and its representative members dominated the government. Policy came from the government to it, or went from it to the government. Being the base of the government on the one hand, it mobilized the nation for the government on the other. Particularly it debated, won converts from, persecuted and initiated government persecutions of the popular mass societies, and the *sans-culottes*. Its propaganda bears striking similarities and essential parallelisms to stalinism. It had the trick of taking the mass socialistic impetus and transforming it into petty-bourgeois formulae. The cult of Reason, of the Supreme Being, or virtue, civicism, nation, all in the hands of Robespierre and Saint-Just retained the revolutionary character against the bourgeoisie and reaction but equally served to subordinate and restrain the masses while keeping intact their revolutionary energy. The dictatorship created the fusion between class, nation, party, state. We must never forget that this dictatorship was a compromise against masses which were profoundly socialistic. I recommend to your attention that in their efforts to attain their very concrete demands, food, clothes, defeat of the enemy at home and abroad, they had to attain them by their own mass mobilization and constant activity, which is precisely socialism. Let us remember that.

Marx it was who pointed out that their mass activity led them to challenge private property, the bourgeois state, religion, the very foundations of the bourgeois regime. They it was who first declared the revolution permanent. The asses who would bray at our designation of the petty-bourgeois dictatorship as state capitalism will look pretty stupid when they see Marx writing that the masses went "as far as the suppression of private property, to the maximum of confiscation". They placed themselves "in violent contradiction with the very conditions of existence of bourgeois society (by) declaring the revolution permanent." Robespierre's Supreme Being and Reason non-sense was to counter the ruthless "dechristianization" of France that the revolutionary masses had started to carry out. They found all this in their activity against the concrete. *The only thing that could have stopped them*, and still gained the revolution, was *state capitalism*. It was the mass self-mobilization that compelled state capitalism.

Marx drew from the French revolution, from the *mass* movement, the principles of revolutionary socialism. That was his great source. The still untranslated early writings show that. It would have been miraculous if the state-capitalist form, the petty-bourgeois dictatorship had *not* appeared also.

The reason that the petty-bourgeois ideality assumed concrete and not merely programmatic form. I cannot go into fully. I cannot either go into the profound question as to how and why in the social conflict, political, and still more strikingly, economic forms of the far distant future appear. I have not even seriously tried to explore this. It is sufficient for us that as Marx noted in the *Critique of Political Economy*, and Hegel always insisted, the end is contained in the beginning, but we can only see the beginning fully as we approach the end.

We now can look at the personnel of the leadership. Whoever attempts to discredit it, whoever hates Washington and Robespierre, I have invariably found, leave the movement in the end. (What is eating them is not Washington and Robespierre but the fact that the revolution, the so-desirable revolution has been left for them to achieve.) This leadership comes almost exclusively from the *professional petty-bourgeois caste*, the highest representation of the petty bourgeois. Carnot is a military engineer, Robespierre and Danton are lawyers, Saint-Just is a journalist, politician, created by the revolution. The generals are young men from this class, or energetic and able rank and filers. They murder one another, but they have an inexhaustible source of renewal from their caste. Recruits from other classes are absorbed by this core. Their boldness, their energy, their ruthlessness, the colossal tasks they empirically undertake, all these are due to the fact that the class unquestioningly represents the basic interests of the revolution and is actually and concretely the most advanced layer of society. They are a genuinely democratic leadership not only in that they represent the leadership of the revolution: from their own social basis they throw up leaders who *never crystallize into a bureaucratic caste*. The whole new petty-bourgeois class is fighting for its interests and the interests of the nation. This crystallization takes place later under Bonaparte. And Marx says even of Bonaparte that he represented revolutionary terror against the counter-revolution.

We must watch for a moment the fate of the petty-bourgeois caste in relation to the French revolution. Bonaparte first came to notice because he was able to crush the proletarian uprising of Prairial 1795 (an uprising that was in some respects more fierce than anything the revolution had so far seen). The revolution under Napoleon seemed dead. It was not. What it lacked was the revolutionary petty-bourgeois leadership.

Bourgeois historians admit today that Napoleon's great swoop on Paris from Elba was the French revolution, its last breath, the peasants, the army, and the Paris masses. It is further known and admitted now on all sides that even after Waterloo, he could have raised the revolution once more and defended France. He refused unconditionally.

The French bourgeoisie (and this must be remembered), which had fought

the world a few years before, crawled before the invading allies under Wellington, Tsar Nicholas and the Bourbons. They abandoned the national independence of France. In the crisis of national defence of 1814-15, the old revolutionary France was ready again for the revolution and the war of revolutionary defence. But they looked to Napoleon, the great soldier to lead them. As he said in the last days: What have I ever done for these people that they should support me now? He didn't know that they were supporting *him* only in appearance.

Where was the petty-bourgeois leadership caste that had fought so splendidly. The old personnel had disintegrated. Some of its representatives had been jailed, some had joined Napoleon, some had become completely bourgeois. But the caste itself was finished as a revolutionary force. Its future course for generations would be following painfully out what the French revolution had established at its very beginning and what its revolutionary energies had been called out to maintain—democracy. Its most eminent representative, novelist, journalist, politician, economist, and vacillator extraordinary, Benjamin Constant, an enemy of Napoleon, was asked by this same Napoleon to draw up a democratic constitution for France.

Let us now look dialectically at the development of the petty bourgeoisie. However different the French intelligentsia is from the artisans and farmers of Cromwell's day, they remain *an intermediate class*. The French revolution gave them democracy. But in that violent crisis the opposite of democracy is forced into existence. Robespierre and Saint-Just in particular were quite ready to carry on the dictatorship indefinitely. This was not theory with them. You can trace Robespierre's evolution. He was at the beginning a convinced democrat. And a democrat in theory he remained, but a democrat who had to fight the big bourgeoisie, incurably reactionary, and the Paris masses. The course of the petty bourgeoisie is charted. Democracy, in constant conflict with bourgeois society, is in crisis the dictatorship of state capitalism under the pressure of the revolutionary masses. In the early beginnings of bourgeois society its programme of democracy is a beacon light. One hundred and forty years later the state-capitalist dictatorship ushers in bourgeois society. A century later its growing weight will transform democracy into a corruption of the proletariat (Menshevism) and as the crisis of society deepens the petty bourgeois turns from democracy to the state-capitalist dictatorship, stalinism, the counter-revolution in its most barbarous form. Robespierre uses the revolutionary energies and menace of the socialistic masses against the bourgeoisie while never daring to touch the fundamental relations of bourgeois production. (The Convention passes a merciless law against the formation of all unions.) Precisely the same policy is the policy of stalinism in the modern conditions.

Marx was never at any time a bourgeois democrat. Bourgeois democracy was a

compromise, a mediation, essentially petty-bourgeois, and the political modus vivendi of the special section of the petty bourgeoisie we have described. The self-mobilized proletariat drove it into the state-capitalist dictatorship. But once bourgeois society was established it was ready to fight for democracy and for democracy only.

In 1830 the masses came out and overthrew the Bourbons. They wanted a democratic republic, a republic like the one Andrew Jackson established about that time in the USA, where you will always find the *substance* of the thing disguised in all sorts of forms. That Louis Philippe ascended the throne was due to some fast work by the petty-bourgeois democrats, led by whom? No less a person than old Lafayette, the man of 1776 and 1789. Mortally afraid of the republic they manoeuvred the masses to the support of constitutional *monarchy*. They wanted democracy without the republic. We have now another dialectic to trace. It will be brief. The Levellers and the Diggers had been the “proletarian” element in 1649. Economic development had made “them” into the embryonic proletariat. By 1848 the embryonic proletariat is the *labour movement*. The proletariat comes out with “everybody” in February 1848, and then in June comes out on its own, *as proletariat*.

That is where we begin. A change takes place in the leadership of the revolutionary forces, a change that bears the stamp of the new social relationships. A labour leadership begins to assume primacy over the petty-bourgeois leadership. The combination is there, typified in two striking symbolic figures, Louis Blanc, the socialist leader and Lamartine, the Romantic poet who was Foreign Minister in the Provisional Government. In 1794 their forerunners were revolutionary. They suppressed the masses (no socialism), but they struck hard brutal blows at the bourgeoisie. Now they talk about socialism, but they are *absolutely bewildered*. You think this is not a political characterization. Wait and see. Bourgeois society is powerful, the masses are revolutionary but not as yet organized enough to show their strength. Hence the bewilderment and vacillation of the leaders.

What class forces are at the back of this? Robespierre the lawyer, Danton the lawyer, Marat the doctor, Saint-Just the journalist, Carnot the military engineer, these men had a class behind them, the petty bourgeoisie, on which they could rely. Its whole social future was at stake. Another numerically powerful class was revolutionary and supported them—the peasantry. They could strike at royalty and the big bourgeoisie, and control the masses. Thence they drew their energy, their determination, their ability as leaders. In 1848 the peasants are not the peasants of 1789. The petty bourgeoisie seeks not the social emancipation of 1789, but merely political power. The proletariat has not formulated any demands. It fights for “the social republic”, but as Engels says, what the social republic is it does not know.

Blanc and Lamartine are not isolated individuals. George Sand, Victor Hugo, Baudelaire, and a body of writers, painters, etc., are supporting the revolution and “socialism”. Blanc is the acknowledged representative of labour in the government. The petty-bourgeois intelligentsia and the labour leader thus appear in the 1848 revolutions; along with marxism, *The Communist Manifesto*. Varlet and Roux reappear as Marx and Engels, Robespierre and Saint-Just as Louis Blanc and Lamartine. Their vacillation and fumbling is essentially a political reflection of the lack of solidity of the classes behind them. Marx has drawn an unforgettable and *strictly political* portrait of them:

But the democrat, because he represents the petty bourgeoisie and therefore a *transition class* in which the interests of two classes are simultaneously deadened, imagines himself elevated above class antagonism generally.... What they represent are the *people's rights*: what interests them are the *people's interests*. Accordingly when a struggle is impending, they do not need to examine the interests and positions of the different classes. They do not need to consider their own resources too critically. They have merely to give the signal and the people, with all its inexhaustible resources will fall upon the *oppressors*. If in the performance their interests now prove to be uninteresting and their power to be impotence, then either the fault lies with pernicious sophists, who split the *indivisible* people into different hostile camps, or the army was too brutalized and blinded to apprehend the pure aims of democracy as best for itself, or the whole thing has been wrecked by a detail in its execution, or an unforeseen accident has for this time spoilt the game. In any case, the democrat comes out of the most disgraceful defeat just as immaculate as he went into it innocent, with the newly won conviction that he is bound to conquer, not that he himself and his party have to give up the old standpoint, but, on the contrary, that conditions have to ripen in his directions. [136](#)

The portrait is that of a vacillator, an incompetent revolutionary, but a revolutionary. The Chartists of 1839-45 are also of this type. They are not yet Robespierres and Carnots. But the revolutionary leadership, within this framework, will harden itself until 1905. Long before 1905 it is definitively a labour leadership. Some observations are in order.

Dialectical analysis is a tricky business. You have to trace all the trends. You must not jump. When you have traced and ended in a blind alley, then go back where you started tracing and jump. We have to trace 1848 to 1905 because during that period the labour leadership slowly establishes its supremacy and makes a historically uninterrupted *revolutionary* progress. The petty-bourgeois intelligentsia is active with its democracy, but it throws up many revolutionary or near-revolutionary leaders. Never at any time is there any sign of a labour leadership which will devote itself to the destruction of the proletarian revolution. From 1789 to 1905 the course of progression is normal, steadily

developing towards the proletarian revolution. What we are seeing today has no precedent, absolutely none, between 1789 and 1905. Neither do the petty-bourgeois political leaders who approach the socialist revolution show any counter-revolutionary tendencies which would be portents of today. A new theoretical leadership emerges. Proudhon, the petty-bourgeois economist of a capitalism controlled by the state; Blanqui, the petty-bourgeois conspirator, the most serious of the lot, because he believed in the *practice* and preparation of revolution, and Bakunin, the anarchist who believes in the spontaneous uprising of all the people to establish socialism forthwith. They are petty-bourgeois, Bakunin is an aristocrat. Marx sees further than they. He settles down to a patient systematic preparation for the fusion of the economic and political struggles of the workers, the integration of day-to-day and revolutionary struggles. He will give the formless labour movement form. In the First International he knows exactly what is wanted. All who are prepared to work for the unified labour struggle are included. Yet the programme holds the revolutionary banner high.

It is impossible here to trace the development of the labour movement under Napoleon III. Sufficient to say that few periods are so important for the class struggle today, particularly in the United States. The petty bourgeoisie carried on its noisy programme for democracy. A labour leadership shared in the parliamentary struggles; but the power which was to be shown came from the work of the International, an isolated victory here and there, great mass demonstrations, etc. Conflicts were sharp inside the movement, but there was a common solidarity against the bourgeoisie. Even Lassalle, whom Marx suspected, and rightly, of dealing with Bismarck, was no *enemy*. When the Commune came, all factions worked together. The leadership was a-conglomeration of all types of views. Some threw over old ideas, the petty bourgeoisie of Paris followed the proletariat. They and the masses improvised, as Lenin said, with the improvisations of genius. The proof of their general revolutionary quality is not only the fearless behaviour of the representative leaders but this: the Proudhonists found in the course of the Commune that they had to act contrary to all their theories—and they did so, threw them over and went with the revolution. Thus with the first stage of 1848-71, the bewildered democrat of 1848 develops into a revolutionary leader, a professional agitator, writer, conspirator, backed and supported by labour leaders. The vigour, the energy, the determination of Robespierre and, his colleagues are born again in the close connection between the labour leadership and the masses. Many famous writers and artists support the Commune. Some accept official posts, such as Courbet, one of the greatest of French painters and already recognized as such.

Read Marx on the Commune. There is no accusation of treachery. Later the International condemns some traitors to its policies. Some acted stupidly, notably Bakunin. In the Spanish revolution of 1856 Engels attacks the follies

and crimes of the anarchists. But these same anarchists are in the International a few years later and the struggle goes on between the leaders as revolutionaries. The German party has conflicts with Marx over the war of 1871. But the party works out by and large a defeatist policy. The proletariat is slow, but in crisis it sees quickly and acts, recognizes its leaders who may blunder badly but do not "betray". Whatever its mistakes it is proletarian. Marx refers to the bourgeoisified character of the English proletariat, he thinks the best of the English revolutionaries is Tom Mann, but he isn't sure that Tom Mann isn't too satisfied with himself because of his friendship with the Lord Mayor. Engels has serious disputes with the German party. and in one remarkable passage he foretells that in the coming World War the Second International will go down and out of it will arise a new revolutionary international which will achieve the social revolution. But that is a historic perspective. Everything will be torn to pieces in such a crisis, and the international with it. It is not a mortal *enemy of the proletariat*. This period has lasted from 1848 to 1905. In Lenin's mind up to 1914 it still existed. There was an opportunist wing in West European social democracy and he compared the Mensheviks to them constantly. But his final refusal to consider unity with the Mensheviks was not on abstract theoretical grounds. He wrote it repeatedly. Our policies are tested in action. Four-fifths of the organized labour movement are following us. Why should we compromise our policy and unite with them?

The one great country where this state of affairs still exists by 1905 is Russia. In that petty-bourgeois country Lenin fights spontaneity, as a marxist, with the result that the Russian proletariat on the basis of heavy industry, improvises the political general strike, the soviets, and follows the Bolsheviks all through *at every critical moment*. The Mensheviks, says Lenin, divide from the Bolsheviks during the 1905 revolutions, but they do not "betray". They rise and fall with the revolution, quick off their feet to fight and quick to retreat. It is absolutely impossible from the history of 1789-1905 to foresee what will take place in the labour movement between 1917 and 1947.

1905 marks the end of a period in the history of proletarian leadership. 1905 and perhaps a few years before to 1917 marks the transition stage. But we do not understand Lenin's violent shock in 1914 and the tremendous labours which it generated in him if we do not understand how slowly but steadily the proletarian leadership had developed in relation to the proletariat, superseding and incorporating the revolutionary elements and leaders of the petty bourgeoisie. Marxism had conquered the petty-bourgeois anarchist theories. There were signs of opportunism but they were looked upon as inevitable. The resolution on war of 1907 and 1912 seemed to continue the great tradition. We have to hold this tight. We shall find again our revolutionary traditions in 1789-1917, we shall find the proletariat as it is in essence *there*. Because from 1917 the proletarian leadership, Menshevik first and stalinist afterwards, once more begins a steady development until today it is *petty-bourgeois*, drawing its

strength, its ideas, its programme, its policy, its tactics, from this *class*. The proletariat which from 1789 to 1917 developed, created its leadership and showed repeatedly its capacity for growth, political understanding and creativity, has not lost its inherent capacity. The petty bourgeoisie is choking it, blunting it, strangling it, through the medium of the labour leadership and the labour aristocracy. We have to see why and how the proletariat *seems* to have lost its political insight and the labour leadership to have become the greatest traitors to their class that history has ever known. We assume that such a development is a development of class relations.

Lenin has traced the economic basis of Menshevism, its political characteristics. He has shown its social and political connection with the petty bourgeoisie. Trotsky never added one single thing to this. We can do more for we have seen Stalinism which is far more characteristic of its origins than Menshevism. We have now a schema of development of the petty bourgeoisie. Let us examine it *concretely* today.

In the “Historical Tendency of Capitalist Accumulation”¹³⁷ Marx describes the process of capitalist development. The argument is familiar. The conscious technical cultivation of the soil, the co-operative form of the labour process, the transportation of all instruments of production into instruments only usable in common, the entangling of all peoples in the net of the world market, the growth of the international character of the capitalistic regime. This is the milieu of socialization in which the proletariat is prepared for the socialist revolution. But as long as the revolution is not achieved, as long as the proletariat does not appropriate the instruments of social labour, this remorseless process of development creates practically a new class of petty bourgeoisie. It is the exact opposite of the peasant and the individual small capitalist as the modern liberal of state control is the exact opposite of the old style individualistic liberal. It consists primarily of the administrators of the new socialized economic structure, *which cannot capitalistically exist without them*.

Secondly capital itself submits to a centralization, its form of socialization. The number of magnates diminishes. But a huge administrative, scientific, technical, clerical staff now substitutes for it. Take the labour administrators, they are not individualists. Socialization is the mould and shape of this class. They are reinforced by the enormously swollen bureaucracies of the bourgeois state. *The old petty bourgeoisie as a decisive social political force is dead*. The new is a formation characteristic, in its own right, of the decline of bourgeois society and the approach of socialism.

We saw the petty bourgeoisie in its classic form, independent yeoman

farmers and artisans, controlling easily the incipient proletarian elements below. It achieves another decisive form in 1789-94, where the intelligentsia, the professional section of the petty bourgeoisie, leads. It then falls back to the struggle for bourgeois democracy, in 1649 a great revolutionary banner, in 1849 a mere mediation and superseded by the proletarian revolution for the leadership of society. Now by 1917 this class, whose changes do not alter its essence, i.e. its intermediate position, has projected a new middle caste as Trotsky calls it in *The History of the Russian Revolution*, only to leave the analysis buried in Russia.

It begins to find itself politically on the basis of the superprofits of imperialism. Like the labour aristocracy without superprofits it could not exist as a privileged caste as is proved by a glance at Europe today. It effects a compromise between revolutionary democracy and revolutionary state capitalism, blunting the revolutionary edge of both in the process. It joins the socialist movement and reinforces the labour leadership already basing itself upon the labour aristocracy. The labour movement, i.e. the bureaucracy, crystallizes into a distinct professional caste. This is signalled by Bernstein's "The movement is everything". The movement, the administration, that is its essence. The professional caste of labour administrators is the political form of the administration of centralized capital, and of socialized labour in capitalist society. Its force, its electoral force, is the working class. This force it disciplines by means of the labour administration and the labour aristocracy. Its perspective is a peaceful accomplishment of what it calls socialism, nationalization of the means of production. The victory of labour at the polls, as it fondly imagines, means *its* power.

Trotsky has frequently noted that even in feudal Russia many Bolsheviks of 1905 had become professional intelligentsia and Mensheviks by 1917. But although Russia through its backwardness could not produce a powerful representation of this class, it formed the core of Menshevism and Trotsky duly noted in *The History of the Russian Revolution*, without taking the analysis any further. What is extremely deceptive about this new petty bourgeoisie is that it nowhere speaks in its own name. It hides itself under the banner of labour and socialism. The Mensheviks in 1917 spoke continually in the name of socialism and the workers. Yet their basis remained this new middle caste. The procedure in the recent American election, whereby the labour leadership worked hard to get out the vote but quickly so as not to frighten the petty bourgeoisie, is characteristic of the relations between labour bureaucracy, labour aristocracy and petty bourgeoisie on the one hand and the proletariat on the other. The Russian Mensheviks in 1917, with their petty-bourgeois base, are the forerunners of the bureaucratic murder caste. (1) Like the Robespierrists they were ready to use the revolutionary masses against the reactionary bourgeoisie, for the consolidation of bourgeois society. (2) Like the Robespierrists they were ready to betray the Bolsheviks, the revolutionary leaders of the masses. (3)

They were ready to use drastic measures against the reaction and the bourgeoisie, yet like the Robespierrists these actions could only be undertaken on the basis of the *subordinated* masses.

It is this last point which has not been grasped. They wanted the peasants to have the land. They could see that the economy had to be reorganized. When Skobelev used the winged phrase of confiscating the profits of the capitalists, this ideality was not mere talk. It would become reality in stalinism. Their programme was so radical that Lenin mockingly pointed out: we, the terrible Bolsheviks, are not so fierce as you. Our programme is not so radical. All we ask you is: how? We propose to do it through the revolutionary masses, the soviets. What do you propose?

Lenin rarely missed the central issue. It was a key question. That debate was not just Bolshevik “sincerity” against Menshevik “insincerity”. The Mensheviks and the Social Revolutionaries were prepared to carry out that programme. If we do not understand this we understand neither Menshevism nor stalinism. They would have given the land to the peasants, they would have nationalized heavy industry. *The objective development would have compelled them to do this.* But like the Robespierrists and far more urgently than these, *they* had to do it. If the peasants and the workers themselves carried it out, the administrative position of the new petty bourgeoisie and the labour bureaucracy was lost for good and all. What Menshevism was defending was not the bourgeoisie, but themselves. But to defend themselves they had to defend the bourgeoisie. Nothing else explains their attitude. If we do not recognize this, we are driven inevitably into psychology. Trotsky calls Leon Blum the agent of French imperialism in the labour movement. He is not precise enough. Leon Blum is or rather was the agent of the French petty bourgeoisie in the labour movement.

The Russian Mensheviks were ready to carry out the programme. But the relationship of forces of 1917 was entirely, qualitatively different from that of 1793. *The proletariat was powerful, organized, united, disciplined. The only condition demanded, the suppression of the proletariat, was however the only means of carrying out the programme.* The Mensheviks therefore had two alternatives: (1) They could seek reinforcement against the proletariat from the bourgeoisie. They tried desperately to do this, but they could get no support. But every single time the bourgeois reaction in Russia looked as if it showed strength the Mensheviks were ready to join the counter-revolution. That is why Lenin jailed and shot them. (2) They could seek reinforcement against the proletariat from a powerful foreign bourgeoisie. They tried desperately for this also but they could not get it. In Georgia they showed unmistakably this aspect of their policy.

Unable to get assistance they collapsed ignominiously before the Bolsheviks. Their refusal to call upon the revolutionary proletariat under any circumstances

shows where their class roots lie. The individuals face death but cannot cut themselves away from the fundamental interests of the class.

In 1918 they 'appeared more decisively in Germany. (1) The bureaucracy was terrified enough by the revolutionary masses who, however, were not led by Bolsheviks. (2) It did *not* fear destruction by the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie and Junkers. They were too weak. The reaction could see that the bureaucracy was its sole barrier against the proletarian revolution. (3) The German army was intact. The bourgeoisie of Western Europe and America, on the direct request of the German high command (which gave its reasons in writing), allowed the army to go home to keep order.

Within this framework the German Mensheviks acted. They struck down Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht and the revolution; they made the necessary gestures to hold the proletariat; they fought for good relations with Anglo-American imperialism. As yet they have not to take drastic measures against the bourgeoisie. After the revolution is safely defeated in 1923, Germany gets the Dawes Loan, etc., and the Social Democrats settle down to a peaceful existence—democracy once more. There ends the first phase of the bureaucratic caste, 1917-23.

So far the dialectical movement has been easy enough. Now, however, you have to roll up your sleeves and get down to it. I have done lots of this thinking in my time and I must say that this particular transition is undoubtedly the most difficult I have met. However, it is OK, I am sure.

You have to bear in mind certain fundamental things.

You have a notion. That notion is *State and Revolution*. That governs *everything*. There is no solution to the problems of society except every cook and every worker to a man administers the state and the economy. That is what Lenin means by the proletarian revolution. Perhaps you have it, perhaps not. (I don't want to insult anybody but I mean what I say.) Without that you get fascism, imperialist war, barbarism of all kinds. Precisely because that is inherent in society, all the barbarism and the evil inherent in human society will emerge also. That is the greatest truth of our time, but we have dealt with that in *Dialectical Materialism and the Fate of Humanity*.

With that always in our minds we then have, as youthful dialecticians, to know what we are doing. We are now *consciously* searching for the dialectical transition out of the contradictions of Menshevism into stalinism. The petty-bourgeois thinker throws up his hands in horror and screams with pain. You *are doing* that, consciously, looking for a preconceived result. I am doing that. I am doing just that. If I didn't do that I couldn't get one dammed foot. I fix my transition in my mind, where I am going and my result, my objective, and I

begin to search.

It isn't difficult to shut up the yellers. Trotsky had his result in mind—the nationalized property, Russian bureaucrats, the private property and national defence reformist international. His thought moved between the concrete and those points as ultimates.

But furthermore. After the first shock, what is so terrible about that. Why do I decide that stalinism comes out of the contradictions of Menshevism? How do I arrive at this as an axis of thought? By caprice, accident, wilfulness?

Nonsense. My whole past reading, my studies, marxism, my painful study and restudy of marxism prepares me for this. Further reality hammers at me.

Trotsky's theories carried out to their end are obviously false. The stalinists act and act differently to his expectations. I re-examine marxism. I re-read Lenin on the Second International and I emerge with a new hypothesis. I say this thing comes not from the Kremlin but from capitalism. I shall *work* at that. I shall see what I shall get. Will it fit the facts? I don't know. Naturally when I do work it out, satisfactorily, I present an article or a thesis. What I am doing here is lifting the lid of the processes of the mind. That is what *I* do and I am positive that is what Marx did at any rate in the writing of *Capital*. It is often a hell of an effort to work out the thing. Often you go all wrong and have to search and search. In this damned thing I was stuck for a long time in the French revolution, then went searching back to the Puritan revolution and so on.

Finally, impatience, subjectivity, will ruin you as sure as day here. You are sure of the end only when you can trace the thing stage by stage, the dialectical development accounting for all the major historical facts. Sometimes you can work backwards. I remember telling Rae one day, "Go and read Populism and search for an independent Negro movement. It ought to be there." She found it in a few hours, over a million Negroes, buried and forgotten. Over and over again I have to look for an important missing link or links. If I cannot find them, I have to give up the theses and try another. If you read how Marx wrote *Capital* you will see he wrote it, a draft, then reorganized it completely, then reorganized that. He was searching for the logical movement which embraced all the facts.

Good. So I am looking for something definite. Now let us reexamine Menshevism, 1917-23. It will not call upon the workers "to a man". *That* for it is out. *It will perish first*. Only men with their feet on the ground, i.e. of a certain class, behave like this. We begin to see that stalinism, as it goes down in Germany in 1933 and in Spain in 1938, *seems* to be depending on stalinist Russia. That is a notion-determination, a particular which we took for a Universal. The Mensheviks. in Russia had no stalinist Russia and they were ready to go down.

Noske and Scheidemann murdered the revolutionary wing of the proletariat.

The Mensheviks would have done the same. Stalinism will later do it repeatedly. It becomes ultimately a mode of existence for them. The thing develops. But the full plant is contained in the germ.

Both Menshevism in Russia and Menshevism in Germany stretch out the hand to a foreign imperialism, *with power*. The weakness of the national bourgeoisie *compels* this. Under pressure of the increasing degeneration of capitalism, this will become full-fledged in stalinism. The plant is contained in the germ.

With the revolutionary leadership of the proletariat, and with a stable basis of support abroad, Menshevism in 1917 and in 1923 would have disciplined the national bourgeoisie. 'We have been thinking, you see. We examined the French revolution; we re-read (with poor me it is often just sitting down and remembering) the facts of the dictatorship. We saw it in a new light. We saw the astonishing measures taken against the bourgeoisie. We look at the Menshevik programme. Furthermore, we are getting rid every day more and more of bookishness, abstractions, to which Trotsky became more and more inclined, when everything was "inner". The 1917 programme was not intended to "deceive" the workers. For a mass party dealing with masses (and a serious programme can come only from there; the rest is a private affair, important to those putting it forward, *very* important for them but not too much else concretely) for a mass party, the programme arises from the objective conditions. The Mensheviks' drastic programme was a reflection of the conditions of Russia. They would not have sat and been overwhelmed by chaos. No, they would carry it out, as stalinism carries it out today. We know why they didn't. But as we look at stalinism we can understand *them* better, and then, looking at them we understand stalinism. We bring the Robespierrist dictatorship to bear. We are moving rapidly from end to beginning, and back again. If you have really mastered your material, in three hours of thinking, you get practised in this also, you can cover the ground back and forth a dozen times. Sometimes you are at a difficult point for weeks. But by degrees, by elimination, by constantly testing, looking up a history book if you have one to see whether a fact, a serious fact, which ought to be there, *is* there, you gradually crystallize this much: the petty-bourgeois character of the stalinist dictatorship, its Robespierrist relationship to the masses and to the bourgeoisie; the specific conditions which made Robespierre revolutionary and makes stalinism counter-revolutionary, the development of capitalist production which deepens the basis of, and changes the personnel of, the petty bourgeoisie and entangles it in an international movement. The dialectical relations come thick and fast, everything begins to move. Democratic Menshevism into stalinist dictatorship: the characteristic movement of the petty bourgeoisie, historically in general and in the French revolution. Now it is repeating itself between 1917 and 1948. The labour murder-caste now is no historical accident, or fruit of Stalin's theory. It begins to assume form as rooted in

historical development. The theoretical line from Menshevism to stalinism is established. What I have done is to refuse to take these labour manifestations separately. I jam them up together and in the very contradictions I find the unity. Everything begins to move.

But good though it is to see the plant in the germ, a task that can be terribly difficult now remains, to trace concretely the historical movement in logical form, and this is complicated by the fact that, except in times of impulse, the concrete transition can take the most exasperating and topsy-turvy, feet-turned-backwards forms. The Hegelian analysis of appearance and essence, form and content, cause and effect, is here invaluable, so that you get quite simple insight and become “practised”. The words are Hegel’s. I read and read and practise. Let us do a little more practice.

Hegel, in his own theory, broke his back right where we are. Stalinism grows out of Menshevism, but Menshevism is there still. In our sense it is easy. The historical movement flows through the old into a new form, backward elements stay in the old, but they are decisive no longer. In fact Lenin said that the old would certainly become larger in the future before the new could finally conquer. But Hegel got himself into a horrible mess over “time”, the relation of the stages which have already emerged and remain to the new. In his own theory, that is; elsewhere he could handle it. But it is a danger-point. Sometimes the new is simple to trace. It develops out of the old, as leninism by the error-dynamic of Bernsteinism came out of the Second International. Stalinism did not come that way out of leninism, nor did it come that way out of Menshevism.

Here is the battle-ground. Ruth Fischer describes how stalinism *in 1923* moved in on the German party and converted it by 1926 into a stalinist party.¹³⁸

(Theory depends on life. I can say that I knew stalinists in Europe from 1933-38, and I *knew* in my own head that they would not change as Trotsky said they would; and I knew also, thinking back, that behind the protest against Trotsky’s position in 1940 was the unformed assumption that the stalinist bureaucracy *would* appropriate state property and the stalinist parties *would* defend Russia. I can remember conversations with Shachtman. All of which proves that it is not your business to yield to impulses, but to keep quiet, sit and think, and work out and search out all that is involved before you take a step.)

Do you mind these digressions? They are related, you know. But I can’t always stay to explain. Ruth Fischer describes the process and the process is very important as she describes it. This is how stalinism concretely came into being in Germany.

The German Communist Party in Berlin was magnificent and her description of it should be framed and hung in every study. Only one thing needs to be said. They, these *workers*, believed that the Central Committee should do what *they* wanted, and not that they should do what the Central Committee wanted. This is *State and Revolution*, that is “Party and Revolution”, and is “planned economy”, that is being and knowing unified, party and mass, individual and universal, *that is everything*. Lenin would have gone down on his knees and praised God if the Russian proletariat in significant numbers had been advanced enough to do that and what it implied.

Stalinism destroyed it, destroyed it utterly. According to Ruth Fischer, stalinist agents went into the *factory cells*, bribed, corrupted, terrorized, gave fur-coats and trips to Russia, and threatened, and finally created a bureaucratic hierarchy whose primary task was the disciplining of German revolutionary workers.

Be on your toes. The first point is the destruction. Stalinist Russia is in irreconcilable opposition to what the German Communist Party represents—*State and Revolution*. It is the most pitiable and demoralizing thing to see in the later years of Trotsky how he found causes here and effects there, how he explained, how the bureaucracy at this stage was moved by this and the stalinist bureaucrats adhered to a bureaucracy and not to the October revolution, and a terrible pile of involved and semi-sociological, semi-psychological arguments. Stalinist Russia in 1923 and a leninist party in Germany were in irreconcilable enmity. Stalinism destroyed it. That is the historical fact.

Now again. It destroyed it because it could find a German caste within the party who were ready to carry out this task. Calling Burnham a *pro-fessor* in time brings its own reward. Whatever their social origin, whatever their subjective motives the fact remains that stalinism finds this caste of labour leaders in Germany in 1923, finds them all over the world, in China, in Korea, in Spain, in Brazil, everywhere, intellectuals, labour leaders, workers who rise—the caste grows, changes composition, but it remains as an entity. It faces death, undergoes torture, finds energy, ingenuity, devotion, establishes a tradition, maintains it, develops it, commits the greatest crimes with a boldness and confidence that can come only from men who are certain of their historic mission. To all this Ruth Fischer is blind, with her fur coats and jobs and terror. Twenty-five years this caste has lasted. We know Robespierre, etc., etc. Isn’t it clear *today* that what is formed in 1923-26 is a petty-bourgeois party within the historic conditions of 1948? It could not be seen then, I agree. But today, after twenty-five years, it is time.

Watch it. It is merciless against the revolutionary communists of Germany. For twenty-five years it will be equally merciless against *State and Revolution*

anywhere. What a conception of history is it that sees the root of this in fur coats, jobs, corruption, and terror? It is regrettable but Trotsky's conception is the same. Only he thought that the corruption, etc., would end in the caste going back to the "pickings" of finance capital (that is Cannon's word). I can only *indicate* here how this sort of business demoralizes the proletariat, makes it shrug its shoulders and say: human nature, it will never change. We may as well not bother.

Secondly, merciless as it is against *State and Revolution*, the caste is equally merciless against the big bourgeoisie of Lenin's *Imperialism*. They may compromise with it, support it, but, Christ, after twenty-five years, we can see now that the Communist Party wherever it feels sure of itself has disciplined the revolutionary masses and is sure of a strong support, will strike as powerful blows against capitalists as Robespierre did in his time and his circumstances. Thus in 1923-26, there is distilled out of Germany an ideality as perfect as the petty-bourgeois democratic demands of 1648 and the dictatorship of 1793-94. If you know what you are looking for you will see, you cannot see otherwise.

The stalinist party in 1926 will never change its essence. It will grow, develop, become more conscious of itself, carry out the most bewildering zigzags, but its fundamental characteristics remain. I can define them. Trotsky could not. Cannon cannot. They are not revolutionary socialist. Not after *State and Revolution*, not after Lenin of 1920 and 1923. No, sir. Revolutionary socialism for us is a most concrete Universal, precise and clear, and still abstract (isn't that Hegel marvelous?). It is not *proletarian*. Have I to argue that the proletariat is revolutionary or it is nothing? I won't. But it is not bourgeois in the current sense. (Later it will be.) But it does not aim at mobilizing the petty bourgeoisie to crush and reduce the proletariat to impotence. Fascism (which I am rigidly excluding from this) is the bourgeoisie of Lenin's *Imperialism* at its traditional practice of using the petty bourgeoisie against the proletariat. But the stalinist party of 1926 is the ideality of the labour bureaucracy using the proletariat against the big bourgeoisie. Thus the stalinist party of 1926 is between the classes; structurally hierarchic, dictatorial, its first enemy *State and Revolution*, wherever it appears; it is a petty-bourgeois formation incarnate. Lenin and Marx too were extraordinarily quick at seeing the essential class significance of any phenomenon. Lenin in particular repeatedly takes apparently insignificant and chance statements, remarks and formations and runs a pin through them, fastening them down, with the appropriate label once and for all. All that is inherent in Menshevism in Russia in 1917 and Germany in 1918 now finds its ideal form in the German Communist Party of 1926 and all over the world. The vitality of the form shows that it is not fur coats and corruption that are at stake. But the Russian state, and still more the Russian party, was the embodiment of that relation between a hierarchic caste leadership and the proletarian base which would later become the basic form of the Communist Party. *With the defeat of 1923*

European parties and above all the German party were ripe for the transformation. Neither the fur coats and jobs of Ruth Fischer, nor the corruption of Trotsky, nor adherence to a victorious bureaucracy explains one God-damned thing. The *activity* of the stalinist agents, the fact that they went and did certain things—*this* holds the observer without the true dialectic by the throat. The *true* dialectic because the German workers of Berlin were showing the true type of party. They could flourish up to 1923. But that type of party cannot live for long in bourgeois society. It cannot discipline the petty-bourgeois elements. The odds are too great. The proletariat must be revolutionary, it must keep on being revolutionary, or it is reduced to nothing, and a substitute takes its place.

There are traps here. Sit up please and concentrate. There is a terrible danger of *ignoring* the actual role of the stalinist agents and the influence of stalinist Russia. I think the best thing to do is to re-state the problem in slightly new terms *and to go back to the Logic*. Naturally we have the actual concrete events from 1926 to the present day. They will tell us finally where we are at, but I want to get the ideality right from all sides. This is the commodity in which all the contradictions are contained.

The choice is as follows: (1) Stalin and the stalinist agents ruined the Communist Party by»bribery and corruption, etc. Then by continuous bribery and corruption they swelled out their victims who have become the Cominform with all the enormous power and internal discipline (and I lay heavy stress on that) which they show. Either that, or: (2) The example of stalinist Russia and particularly of the stalinist party and the intervention of stalinist agents set in motion what is at first a distillation of very intensive quality—the pure abstract essentiality of a certain type of party—the bare bones. But though subsequent history shows (and we will show it) that this is not object—it is in reality subject, a beginning an abstract Universal, a form, which a powerful class content will fill and develop and expand until today it is a mighty power.

The relationship is a relationship between form and content, between cause and effect, freedom and necessity, action and reaction. I can't see any better way out than to go back to Hegel himself. If you have learnt to love the *Logic*, you will not mind. I shall let him speak almost entirely for himself.

Form and Content

The essential point to keep in mind about the opposition of Form and Content is that the content is not formless, but has the form in its own self, quite as much as the form is external to it. There is thus a doubling of form. At one time it is reflected into itself; and then it is identical with the content. At another time it is not reflected into itself and then is the external existence,

which does not at all affect the content. We are here in presence, implicitly, of the absolute correlation of content and form: viz. their reciprocal revulsion so that content is nothing but the revulsion of form into content, and form nothing but the revulsion of content into form. This mutual revulsion is one of the most important laws of thought. But it is not explicitly brought out before the Relations of Substance and Causality.¹³⁹

Now think of the Communist Party (1923-26) as form, and social democracy and the labour aristocracy and behind them the new middle caste, the new petty bourgeoisie as content. A dialectician is aware of those and their violent revulsion back and forth, not of fur coats and memories. There is a contradiction—sure; *jam them together*, see that they interpenetrate; then things will begin to move. You see you have to strive for “quite *simple* insight”.

Cause and Effect

The cause was stalinist intervention and the effect was the corruption of the stalinist parties, etc. Mighty consequences. No. We say that this cause seemed to have such a powerful effect because there was an *effect* waiting to be caused. The cause *and* the effect are in the *substance* of the thing. Fur coats and the GPU were effective causes in the world outside Russia because the great effects there were ripe for some such cause. We are dealing here with mighty world forces, let us remember.

Our old friend Hegel is here at his most exasperating in brevity, conciseness and perverse obscurity.

Substance is CAUSE in so far as substance reflects into self as against its passage into accidentality and so stands as the *primary* fact, but again no less suspends this reflection-into-self (its bare possibility), lays itself down as ‘the negative of itself, and thus produces an EFFECT, an actuality, which, though so far only assumed as a sequence, is through the process that effectuates it at the same time necessary.¹⁴⁰

But he opens out against the false method.

The way understanding bristles up against the idea of substance is equalled by its readiness to use the relation of cause and effect. Whenever it is proposed to view any sum of fact as necessary, it is especially the relation of causality to which the reflective understanding makes a point of tracing it back. Now, although this relation does undoubtedly belong to necessity, it forms only one aspect in the process of that category. That process equally requires the

suspension of the mediation involved in causality and the exhibition of it as simple self-relation. If we stick to causality as such, we have it not in its truth. Such a causality is merely finite, and its finitude lies in retaining the distinction between cause and effect unassimilated. But these two terms, if they are distinct, are also identical. Even in ordinary consciousness that identity may be found. We say that a cause is a cause, only when it has an effect, and vice versa. Both cause and effect are thus one and the same content; and the distinction between them is primarily only that the one lays down and the other is laid down. This formal difference however again suspends itself, because the cause is not only a cause of something else, but also a cause of itself; while the effect is not only an effect of something else, but also an effect of itself. The finitude of things consists accordingly in this. While cause and effect are in their notion identical, the two forms present themselves severed so that, though the cause is also an effect, and the effect also a cause, the cause is not an effect in the same connection as it is a cause, not the effect a cause in the same connection as it is an effect. This again gives the infinite progress, in the shape of an endless series of causes, which shows itself at the same time as an endless series of effects.¹⁴¹

As I think over Trotsky's writings I can see this sequence of cause and effect in an endless chain. This happened, *then* the other, *then* the stalinist bureaucracy did this; then; and so he keeps up an endless series of explanations, fascinating, brilliant, full of insight and illumination, to crash into his catastrophic blunders at the end. Every illustration by Trotsky of the criminal results of the stalinist intervention on the world proletarian struggle, is in reality a deadly blow against the capacity of the proletariat to conquer and to rule. It is trotskyism therefore which has the greatest doubt in the capacity, the historical capacity of the proletariat. We, on the other hand, who show that stalinist *cause* could create the mighty worldwide *effect* because it elicited *class* forces hostile to the proletariat and inherent in capitalist society at this stage of its development, we restore to the proletarian struggle the historical objectivity of the struggle of the classes with social roots. We finish away with the demoralizing, in fact self-destroying, theory that everything would have been all right, but for the intervention of stalinist corruption. The subjectivism that trotskyism has *initiated and maintained* in the marxist movement and *around* it goes out. It becomes possible to analyse objectively and to plan policy objectively.

Form and content, cause and effect involve the important question of how the Fact necessarily comes into existence. Hegel tells us.

Among the three elements in the process of necessity—the Condition, the Fact and the Activity—(i.) The Condition is (a) what is pre-supposed or ante-stated, i.e. it is not only supposed or stated, and so only a correlative to the fact, but also prior, and so independent, a contingent and external circumstance which

exists without respect to the fact. While thus contingent, however, this pre-supposed or ante-stated term, in respect withal of the fact which is the totality, is a complete circle of conditions. (b) The conditions are passive, are used as materials for the fact, into the content of which they thus enter. They are likewise intrinsically conformable to this content, and already contain its whole characteristic. (ii.) The Fact is also (a) something pre-supposed or ante-stated, i.e. it is at first, and as supposed, only inner and possible, and also, being prior, an independent content by itself. (b) By using up the conditions, it receives its external existence, the realization of the articles of its content, which reciprocally correspond to the conditions, so that whilst it presents itself out of these as the fact, it also proceeds from them. [142](#)

This last paragraph is the one. The Communist Party of 1926 is inherent in the conditions, inner. How else could it become the powerful Cominform of today? Then you get the trotskyist method. Russia was backward, the Civil War ate up the best communists, the bureaucracy developed, the bureaucracy for power and privilege corrupted the Comintern, the Comintern.... I could if I wanted make a real riot of this. I prefer to say Menshevism was inherent in world capitalism, came to its maturity in 1917-23, no longer corresponded to reality; and just as Menshevism rose out of the revolutionary leadership of 1848-1905, so stalinism rose out of the revolutionary leadership of 1917-23.

But, says Ruth Fischer, the stalinist agents intervened. I saw them. The official trotskyists in a corner will say, “Of course! But ...”, and go straight back to where they are. Hegel puts the agent in his place, third place.

(iii.) The Activity, similarly, has (a) an independent existence of its own (as a man, a character), and at the same time it is possible only where the conditions are and the fact. (b) It is the movement which translates the conditions into fact, and the latter into the former as the side of existence, or rather the movement which educes the fact from the conditions in which it is potentially present, and which gives existence to the fact by abolishing the existence possessed by the conditions. [143](#)

Finally the two forces react on each other. They have an independent growth. Trotsky never saw the effect on Russian stalinism of the existence and growth and force, actual and potential, of the Comintern. It was always the opposite way. Stalin was deceiving, corrupting the Comintern and the Comintern would deceive him in the end. We shall have painfully to reorganize in our minds the effect of the forces represented by the Comintern (in essence, the world market expressing itself in a particular form) on the bureaucracy. Says Hegel:

The effect is different from the cause. The former as such has a being dependent on the latter. But such a dependence is likewise reflection-into-self and immediacy; and the action of the cause, as it constitutes the effect, is at the same time the pre-constitution of the effect, so long as effect is kept separate from cause. There is thus already in existence another substance on which the effect takes place. As immediate, this substance is not a self-related negativity and *active*, but *passive*. Yet it is a substance, and it is therefore active also: it therefore suspends the immediacy it was originally put forward with, and the effect which was put into it: it reacts, i.e. suspends the activity of the first substance. But this first substance also in the same way sets aside its own immediacy, or the effect which is put into it; it thus suspends the activity of the other substance and reacts. In this manner causality passes into the relation of *Action and Reaction*, or *Reciprocity*.¹⁴⁴

That about covers the ground, the real Ground: 1917-26. There, on the basis of the concrete class analysis of the petty bourgeoisie, we can get the fundamental analysis of stalinism. The back of it is broken.

We have difficult tasks ahead, but they will not be so difficult now. They are: (1) to establish the growth of stalinism in idea and in actuality; (2) to establish empirically how the fully petty-bourgeois content of stalinism finds itself expressed in the form; (3) the illustration by analogy (a very useful kind of illumination when you know what you are doing).

The full maturity of stalinism is reached in 1933. By 1933 Menshevism no longer pretends to be revolutionary. It is established as a satellite of Anglo-American imperialism. When that is behind it, it will act. Otherwise it capitulates either without a struggle or by a kind of defensive reflex action as in Austria in 1934. That is one wing of the bureaucratic caste; stalinism is the other wing, attached to the other power. They are different, but their identity is proved by the identical reaction to the threat of Hitlerism. Trotsky expressed with perfection the falseness of his method when he waited for a conference to see if the Comintern would seriously look at its “mistakes”. But when he saw that they would not “learn”, the word is his own, he called for the Fourth International. All the policies, the theory and practical politics of our movement are in that pitiful episode. Trotsky waiting to see if the Comintern would “learn”. It is the father and mother of “higher transitional slogans”.

The stalinist party sacrificed the German proletariat because it was its essential nature to do so. To think otherwise is to play with history.

It has never since 1923, except in remote areas, called upon the proletariat to revolt. If the proletariat revolts the first requirement of the communist party is to crush this; or discipline it by destroying the revolutionary wing, or, if this is impossible, by handing the proletariat over to the enemy.

In Spain the proletarian uprising was so complete—*State and Revolution* appeared. Stalinism in Spain allied itself with the petty-bourgeois anarchist and socialist bureaucracies. Unable to find a proletarian basis, it based itself upon the middle classes, particularly the intelligentsia and small masters; it carried out a fusion with the Socialist Party, assassinated all revolutionary forces, and finding victory on that basis impossible, delivered the proletariat to Franco.

The “cause” of this we are informed is the foreign policy of stalinism, as the same is the “cause” of the capitulation in Germany in 1933. Everything then rests upon the GPU, this bribery, this corruption has one victim that it will ruin—that is the trotskyist movement. Germany, 1933, proves negatively and Spain positively the forces which provide a basis for stalinism, the petty-bourgeois leadership, in its primary war against the revolutionary proletariat. The petty-bourgeois elements find their way to stalinism in a historical manner by violent leaps, retirements by good-will, by bad-will, but they find their way.

The whole Popular Front Manoeuvre was part of the organic movement of the new petty bourgeoisie toward stalinism and the fusion of the Menshevik and stalinist camps of the bureaucratic caste. Had the Communist Party been a revolutionary proletarian party it could not possibly have carried out the Popular Front policy. But the party in its very structure is now an instrument for carrying out this or any other policy. Those who do not fit in are driven out.

That the war split the bureaucracies into apparently irreconcilable wings interrupts but does not check the movement. In Germany even after 22 June 1941, the German Communist Party *never* called for the proletarian revolution. It said specifically that it wanted no such thing. It sought to build a national grouping of the left. Stalin warned of the need to prevent a repetition of 1918.

The resistance movements in Western Europe were watered down by the stalinist championship of the petty bourgeoisie in its ranks. In Warsaw and Poland where the movement was proletarian, stalinism for years systematically sought out and murdered the revolutionary representatives.

By 1944 the next great phase begins. The social-democratic bureaucracies after the attraction of the Popular Front and the repulsion of the first period of the war, begin to find their way to stalinism. The socialist parties in Eastern Europe are incorporated into the stalinist parties. Whoever believes that these marriages are necessarily shotgun marriages is living still in 1910. Some die-hards who cannot adapt themselves may continue to bleat about democracy but the organization as a whole goes willingly enough. Why can one be so sure of this? Because in Italy Nenni and the social-democratic bureaucracy, knowing quite well what was involved, steered their party to the closest alliance with stalinism. The labour bureaucrats who do not join stalinism as a political party see their way to collaborate in the union movement. Jouhaux was their ally,

unwillingly perhaps, but their ally. The prospect of independence by means of the Marshall Plan pulled him over away from them. He will join them again tomorrow. The process of fusion of the two bureaucracies proceeds, discrete and continuous, by attraction and repulsion, of which Hegel by the way has written plenty. Will the fusion of the bureaucracies or the domination of the Communist Party, the petty-bourgeois elements inside the Communist Party, as fellow travellers, etc., increase enormously? In France for example the domination of the Communist Party has pulled over a number of trotskyist intellectuals and former party members. They cluster around the party in significant numbers (I shall take this up in a moment in more detail). In Eastern Europe, following a trend which began in Spain, petty-bourgeois police and army personnel can find their way into the Communist Party and the ruling bureaucracy. If a few big names like Sloboda are afterwards purged, that does not alter the solid accretions to the caste. These are in perfect harmony with the revolution made by the handpicked "action committees". The climax is reached when the masses of the petty bourgeoisie of Czechoslovakia poured into the Communist Party after the coup. In Eastern Germany the process is rapidly at work. The German communist leader has spoken for a fully mature and self-conscious Cominform when he boldly and openly states that now the basis of communism is not the class struggle.

Before we examine the petty bourgeoisie *in the light of this analysis*, let us repeat and amplify, concretize, some fundamental principles. This petty bourgeoisie, the administrative bureaucratic section of the class is not permanently and incurably counter-revolutionary. Not at all. But it can become revolutionary in the sense of *State and Revolution* only under the violent impact of the proletariat as proletariat. This is a commonplace. In Spain, after the great upheaval of 1936, many Social Democratic leaders, reeling under the impact, went to the Communist Party, and placed themselves at its disposal for the leninist revolution. Andre Marty, the French stalinist, in a widely-published report boasted that the stalinist leadership had to explain to them that the revolution in Spain was a revolution on the model of France one hundred and fifty years before and not on the model of Russia. The bureaucratic caste and its immediate social basis is subject to the power of the proletariat *when it is something*. But it does not willingly seek this. It has to be hit on the head with it. Bolshevism consisted essentially of the cutting away of all links which would obscure the essentially proletarian character of revolutionary action. That was the only way to win the petty bourgeoisie. Stalinism is the exact opposite of this. Its whole development has aimed at disciplining, or if need be, crushing the revolutionary power of the proletariat, and thus opening the way for its social and political subordination to the petty bourgeoisie.

The only real difficulty, and it is only a show, is the fact that as in Menshevism, the petty bourgeoisie corrupts, infiltrates and then, as is historically convenient, quietly at first and then openly comes out on the side

of the bureaucratic caste against the proletarian revolution—against *State and Revolution*. But it does all this under the banner of “socialism”.

When you jam the contradictions up against each other, everything begins to move. This masquerading of the petty bourgeoisie under a phoney banner is one of the most remarkable characteristics of our time. Russian stalinism, by 1923 a petty-bourgeois grouping if ever there was one, built itself into a full-fledged class preserving the outward coverings of leninism. Every Menshevik and Social Revolutionary who had fought Lenin returned to the party of Stalin as a leninist. Hitler called his party the National Socialist Workers' Party of Germany. Many took him seriously. He had to purge the anti-bourgeois petty bourgeoisie out of his party in 1934. The workers and socialism. This new petty bourgeoisie merely keeps this drapery about it, that's all.

The petty bourgeoisie as a whole we have not analysed and do not propose to, its experiments with fascism, the various strata of it, the role they play, etc. All we need is the decisive role of the new middle caste, the administrative elements who are now leading, the dominant lawyers, journalists, etc., of Robespierre's day. I do not propose to repeat everything. But there are certain things which can be said about the class as a whole, fascistic elements and all, which bring out all the more strongly the characteristics of its most socially and politically effective representatives.

The petty bourgeoisie as a class today is not a defender of private property. After 1944 even the Catholic conservative element of the petty bourgeoisie which so rapidly organized the Mouvement Républicain Populaire in France was ready for nationalization. The failure of the Mouvement Républicain Populaire has driven the petty bourgeoisie into the ranks of De Gaulle. They would not turn a hair at a nationalization programme by De Gaulle. In fact De Gaulle's party most certainly contains anti-Communist elements who would at the same time welcome drastic action against “the trusts”. Nowhere in the petty bourgeoisie is that the problem. Private property in large-scale industry and free enterprise are dead among the large majority of the population in any modern state, including the USA. The test will come when they have to be defended. What the petty-bourgeois in all its ranks fears is what Petaud aptly named “proletarianization”, the dropping into the ranks of labour or being ruled by labour. The class splits, the conservative elements going to fascism, the socialized revolutionary elements towards the labour movement. Stalinism today offers them precisely what they are seeking: a vigorous campaign and, when these are safely protected by the Red Army, drastic action against the bourgeoisie. At the same time the most active and politically minded of the new class find the perfect milieu for their administrative talents both in the party today and the stalinist state tomorrow.

If the identity achieves its most perfect form in the party, it is because the

party is the characteristic social form of today. We have only to observe the communist parties of France and Italy to see the completely petty-bourgeois content and form of what began in 1923-26 as pure abstract form.*

I do not think it in any way accidental that the idealities of petty bourgeoisie appear in 1648 as a democratic army, in 1793 as a revolutionary dictatorship and in 1923-26 as a form of party organization. But we have to limit ourselves.

The paper of the French Communist Party, *L'Humanité*, is the largest morning paper in France. The stalinists print five provincial dailies, and eight more daily papers are associated with them. They print the largest sports magazine in the country, the largest farm magazine, and one of the largest women's magazines. They publish in Paris thirteen professional weeklies, sixty-five regional weeklies all over the country, literary reviews, economic monthlies, magazines for the movie industry, and even a monthly on military affairs.

They are at work on an Encyclopedia of France. And marxism, French history, world history, -science and art, these they treat in a never-ending flood of books, articles, lectures, classes, etc. It is petty bourgeois in every sense. The great negative fact is that this flood of propaganda and agitation rejects the proletarian revolution. One thing it does not do—it never inculcates the self-mobilized revolutionary action of the organized proletariat. The very nature of this flood shows whom it is aimed at, *the revolutionary petty bourgeoisie*. It substitutes "thought", "education", "information", for the *only means* of self-education, action. It is the main ideological source of the stifling of the proletariat.

These publications, their organization and publication, still further widen the social milieu for the new petty bourgeoisie of all types to carry on an essentially bourgeois function.

The content of this material is petty bourgeois to the core. In a recent series of articles in *Partisan Review* Jean-Paul Sartre (again, *not one of us*) has exposed this content of communist propaganda for what it is. I ask once more: what *class*, what class in France, not in 1923 or in Russia in 1936, what class in France finds its essential, its most perfect concrete expression in the Communist Party?

I do not propose for us to go into the personnel of the bureaucratic caste. Its class roots tell the full story. What is far more important is the role of the proletariat. Behind the facade of socialism and labour, the labour aristocracy and the petty bourgeoisie of that day allied to it did their secret work and the death of the Second International was totally unexpected by the most acute observers. The genuine proletariat had to fight its way through for years, starting from nothing. The same process is at work today—the great masses of

proletarians are being held down by a caste far more widely and deeply based than its Menshevik predecessors. What is taking place here is the struggle of classes. Under the banner of revolution and socialism and enmity to the bourgeois *property*, the new petty bourgeoisie led by the bureaucratic caste and its objective support, is seeking to strangle the proletariat as a revolutionary force and convert its power into a docile appendage of the petty bourgeoisie. The proletariat does not choose between policies, as it did between 1848 and 1905. The two organizations, social democracy and stalinism, but more particularly stalinism, lay in wait for it, like hunters who cover all modes of exit with their traps. The animal may, in fact will fight his way out, but it is through that process he will gain his freedom. He cannot avoid it. He cannot go round. Whoever tries to indicate another road is blasted by every weapon in the bureaucratic armoury. There is only one way out, the smashing of the whole apparatus as apparatus. The apparatus has developed unerring precision, skill and ruthlessness in finding the forces which it needs to carry out the fundamental basis of its politics—suppression of the proletariat.

And here I would like to ask the Cannonites a rhetorical question, somewhat as follows: "Gentlemen, you who are experts at detecting the petty-bourgeois symptoms in the party, you who from social origin, or demeanour, or political deviation of the slightest shade can scent, and rightly so, the faintest whiff of the sickly petty-bourgeois flavour, I ask you: if so many petty phenomena have, and they *do* have class roots, what are the class roots of this monstrous phenomenon which now dominates the labour movement?" You have no answer, or do you still close your eyes and ears and shout "tools of the Kremlin"? But that invocation having been uttered you face the question: what class interest is here represented? Do not tell me the bourgeoisie. "Of course, the bourgeoisie. Of course!" We can use the "of course" too. But when Trotsky described the political characteristics of Burnham and Shachtman, he said precisely: these characteristics are the characteristics of a class, the petty bourgeoisie.

Is it that you propose to fall back on the caste as such? Good God! In Russia the state leads a great country into a world destroying war, emerges victorious with power unknown in history, prepares for another and corrupts the world proletariat. This, if we are to believe you, is the work of a caste, not of a class. In the outside world using and abusing the vanguard of the proletariat is another caste. So that both these portents and agents of universal disaster are castes, things which have Sprung up somehow due to the theory of socialism in a single country. I leave you with this: we are seeing here the manifestations of what social class? You have no answer. Your sole answer can be written in one line: "tools of the Kremlin" and "masses deceived". It will not do.

Its politics of the party now are as simple to understand as the alphabet.

(1) They are for the defence of the USSR and the victory of the Red Army. They must be. Whether the party is large or small, they suffer and bear untold strain for this. It is for them neither ignorance, stupidity, nor terror. This is the only guarantee of their future political power. When they turn on 22 June 1941, there is no mystery. They can wait. *Given the victory of the Red Army, they have the positions prepared for the new petty bourgeoisie of the United States.*

(2) They advocate the nationalization of the means of production and planned economy. By that they mean exactly what exists in Russia today, only in advanced countries they propose to manage it better. They propose to eliminate crisis, raise the standard of living and education, etc., etc. There is neither deceit, nor hypocrisy, nor stupidity, nor any subjectivism whatever in the adherence of a convinced stalinist to this programme. It is the petty-bourgeois adaptation to the contemporary political crisis. The suppleness of their twists and turns, their fanatical faith, are rooted in class perspective.

That stalinism is the next stage of human society needs no discussion here. We have demolished that thesis amply enough. What we have done is to demonstrate the social roots of the power of the bureaucratic caste and its historical development. As we have shown elsewhere, today it actually administers capital in production. Without this caste the capitalist class could not run industry at all. What is of far more importance for us is the conclusion to which we can now come. *This caste is the channel and the only channel, the form and the only form, by which the new petty bourgeoisie and its allies can maintain and expand their asphyxiating influence upon the proletariat.* Through this caste the petty bourgeoisie of socialized labour and centralized capital seeks to reconstruct society in its own administrative image. This caste is a party leadership in name only. It is the vanguard of the petty bourgeoisie. But based as it is in industry, it holds the vital positions. The proletariat will have to destroy the caste utterly and make its own path to the petty bourgeoisie. The proletariat cannot adapt these bureaucracies to its use. The labour leadership of the Commune fought to the death. Menshevism of 1905 fought to the end. But the leaderships of today, being what they are, have it as set purpose to deliver the proletariat to its cruellest enemies rather than unloose its revolutionary energies. As the policy of the administrative petty bourgeoisie, it is sound. The victory of Hitler, the victory of Franco holds the promise of their fighting again at a later stage. But *State and Revolution* means their total elimination. The main task, in fact the only task of the proletariat, is itself to eliminate them. As fascism knew, the modern state cannot hold down the modern population with the traditional army and police. The masses can sweep them away or win over decisive sections in a few hours. Where fascism does not exist, the cement of society is the bureaucratic caste. Through it, the proletariat of *State and Revolution* is suppressed. Through it the petty bourgeoisie is nil. Through this

caste the big bourgeoisie can live. When this caste decided to take over as in Britain or to sabotage as in France or Italy, the big bourgeoisie must submit. It represents the point of equilibrium of forces, but is capitalistic because it rests on the suppressed proletariat. Its elimination means the end of bourgeois society.*

The petty-bourgeois character of Menshevism was well understood by Lenin. Yet he advocated critical support. We in *The Invading Socialist Society* have shown the relation today between criticism and support. We have to beware of arguments which will try to say: "Your logic means no *critical support*." Beware of it because it is not honest. It is a way of *opposing* the thesis in a roundabout manner.

Very briefly now, I propose to list this whole analysis by what I loosely call analogy—the analysis of the bureaucracy of the CIO and AFL. Cannon's explanation is simple. "Pickings". The cognition is not philosophical. The labour bureaucracy in the United States is brother to stalinism and demonstrates that stalinism is an organic type.

The bureaucracy today is subservient to one great imperialist power as stalinists are subservient to the other. It is caught in the same basic dilemma between the profoundly revolutionary masses and uses them as a threat against the bourgeois state. Its aim now is to drive the stalinists out of the labour movement. It actively collaborates with the American bourgeoisie to build up an anti-stalinist labour force abroad, by bribery and corruption. Its most characteristic exemplar is Reuther. In return for bringing the proletariat into the war, Reuther demanded the planned administration of the automobile industry. At the end of the war he demanded planned control of production and distribution, and backed it by the threat of the revolutionary masses. "Open the books". The slogan, as he explained it at the start, was closer to *State and Revolution* than anything stalinism has said for two decades.

That is precisely the petty-bourgeois oscillation between the planned recovery of the administrators and the use of the threat of the revolutionary masses against the big bourgeoisie. That is not yet classic stalinism, but it is not classic Menshevism. An industrial structure ready for conversion into total social capital, a proletariat which is ready to repudiate private property and national defence (the miners in 1943 spoke by their actions for the *whole* proletariat)* and in the stay-in strikes and the CIO twelve long years ago, demonstrated that they are on the same road as the French and Spanish workers of that period—they seek huge mass mobilizations of the proletariat. Those are the two horns that the labour bureaucrats have to ride. They are in a deadly terror of both. *Their* particular determination for keeping the proletariat under the domination of the petty bourgeoisie is the Democratic Party. But their course is predestined. Given the inevitable crisis of the system in

depression, war, financial collapse, elements like Reuther will seek to tighten their control of the revolution by the elimination of consciously revolutionary masses, and on this basis, but on this basis alone, lead a drastic attack against the bourgeois opponents of a planned economy. The violence of the crisis will determine the violence with which this dual strategy will be used. Like the stalinists in Russia, the American bureaucrats are in a position where the national aggregation of capital and the surrounding conditions are on such a scale that there can be no capitulation to any foreign power. In Germany the two bureaucracies meet under the leadership of the agents of their respective masses of capital. The parallelism of their respective policies, of their German counterparts in each zone, the class and caste relations show the essential logical unity within the very different imperialistic structures.

I may have said earlier, but in any case I repeat: not only are there marxists who will not recognize the type of thinking which sees the proletariat as the product of international capitalism. They see the miners' actions of 1943 as separate, distinct. Probably the coal dust irritates them. They destroy, these reactionaries, even the national unity of the proletariat.

Practice

I do not propose to spend more than ten lines on the "leninist concept of the party", that noose around our throats. For our one world, our socialized world, the party must be the organized labour movement. To believe that the party is less a vanguard party because it contains all the workers "to a man", that is today a completely reactionary concept and is in essence trotskyism. It cannot be defended without leading step by step to the most reactionary concepts of the proletariat. A few minutes of reflection should show this.

The vanguard of the vanguard organizes itself as it always has, on the basis of a strenuous analysis of the objective movement of society. That is what we are doing. It forms its own propaganda group or circle or party and propagates the destruction of the bureaucracy. It can be fifty or five thousand or fifty thousand. It is precisely the dialectical character of marxism which leads it in general to advocate the total organization of the state as a preliminary to its immediate withering away. It is but an example of the terrible contradiction of our line that the party must organize itself for no other purpose than to propagate the destruction of bureaucracy. This for example would not involve a single departure from the organizational course of Johnson-Forest, which it has followed in the past and has outlined for the future.

It would involve, however, immense differences in practice. These must be outlined. But there should be no misconception of what I propose here. Programmes are not written by isolated individuals out of the Hegelian logic and analysis of the labour movement. All such are worse than useless. But from

a theoretical study such as this there emerge certain categories which can guide workers in the factory and union movement to develop a programme and so concretize propaganda and agitation. This being understood, the following can be written for study.

The whole propaganda and agitation must revolve around the destruction of the bureaucracy. By this means every serious problem of those which are wearing down the revolutionary movement can be placed on a new basis.

- (a) Destruction of the bureaucracy is an impregnable basis for the unmistakable separation of the revolutionary movement and socialism from stalinism or totalitarianism. The enemies of Bolshevism who have won victories so consistently over the past years can be routed on this basis. On any other basis the victory will continue to be theirs.
- (b) Destruction of the bureaucracy and the analysis of leninism along the lines indicated here draws an unbridgeable gulf between the great masses of the proletariat and the bureaucracies everywhere, including those of the United States and Great Britain. No worker in Britain can fail to understand what is the revolutionary distinction between the Labour Party government and a workers' state. Until by serious work the British comrades can establish this *in their own minds* and then seek to concretize it, they will never make an inch of progress.
- (c) In the USA the proletariat is ready for this. In its great masses it hates the bureaucracy with an abiding hatred. Very significant for our whole thesis is the fact that the leaders of the CIO movement in 1935-37 are *not* the bureaucrats of today. Without fur coats and jobs, they have retired to the ranks, baffled by the bureaucracy. These and this type should be the target of the party's activity.
- (d) The committees of which we speak are an abstraction and will continue to be an abstraction until they are posed as concrete embodiment of the struggle, and fought there. That is where the battle is today.

This is socialism. Lenin always found the swiftest concrete embodiment of the struggle, and fought there. That is where the battle is today.

From this flows concrete tactics of great importance. Leninism *never* accepted the organizational limitations of the enemy. By methods which the bureaucracy would call "illegal" the *revolutionary* struggle against the bureaucracy must be carried on in the unions themselves. This alone would revolutionize the practice of the party.

I shall now, by means of example only, make one or two excursions into the concrete. As a logical line for concretization I propose for the miners:

- (1) They themselves, committees of miners, form the plan. They know better how to do it than anyone else.
- (2) They themselves, e.g. in Britain, visit American mines (and vice versa) in order to compare methods of work, machinery, etc.
- (3) They themselves who made the plan must be responsible for its being carried out.
- (4) They themselves will distribute the special allowances of food, clothing, allocate housing, distribute scarce goods in their neighbourhood.

These are along the lines of the theses of Rudzutak. I assert that the miners of Britain, France, the United States and Russia are more ready for this programme than were the miners of Russia in 1920. Lenin did not wait for all the workers to form soviets before writing *State and Revolution*. The debate in 1920 brought out that the backwardness of Russia made it impossible for the unions to manage all of Russian industry.

The workers of the advanced countries today are able to manage all of industry.

Syndicalism consists (a) of individual unions running industry independently, (b) of unions exercising an independent course of action against the control of the party. No worker in advanced countries today want to run their industry independently. Only trotskyist polemicists imagine such workers. If the party consists of every worker to a man and every cook, then there is no serious danger of serious conflict between individual unionists and the party. Rudzutak's thesis and that whole debate should be carefully studied.

One more excursion into the concrete.

The broadcasts and programme of the Socialist Workers' Party on the elections should have been just this. Dobbs tried his best. However, *his* proposal was that if *he* were elected President he would summon the workers to elect a cabinet. He should have said. exactly the opposite. The workers should elect their own representatives to a Central Council and the Central Council should elect their President. The election? To hell with the election. We were using the election as a platform and we wanted votes as a demonstration for all those who thought this way.

The latest circular by James P. Cannon embodies exactly the opposite of these ideas. It separates general anti-capitalist agitation and propaganda from the fundamental principles of marxism. *Then* we did agitation, *now* we do this theory. *That* we said to the workers; *this* we use to inspire our members. The two should be divided about 50:1 each. It is the exact opposite of what we think. The *only* propaganda, the only theoretical principle of marxism that is

worth any attention, is the analysis of the bureaucracy and why it should be destroyed. It should be described to the workers and the party should be instructed in it every day to learn how to make it concrete to the workers.

This I know is Greek to our opponents. But as I write the German people are being fought over as dogs fight over a bone. France is being torn to pieces. Britain lives by blood-plasma from the United States. The world moves to civil war and imperialist war or imperialist civil war. They are being prepared openly before the people. The stalinists are overrunning China. They aim at Burma, Korea, the Malay States, Indonesia, Indo-China and then India. Year by year for thirty years this is the course bourgeois society has taken. Since 1933, fifteen years ago, it has gone downward without a pause. It has been worthwhile writing this if only to settle for ourselves why, when we propose that the Fourth International orient itself around telling the workers that they alone, in every country, have the power to alter this and that only by their own independent power—our most violent opponents are not workers but the trotskyists themselves. As I have been writing this, one thing keeps popping into my mind and I cannot drive it out. Their organizations stagnant and dwindling, they stand impregnable, ready to go down with the proletariat on the basis of their analysis that the workers are not ready. I think of the stalinists in Germany in 1933 and in Spain in 1938. They too explain that their treacherous compromises are due to the fact that the workers are not ready. Dialectic explains their difference and their identity.

Notes

1.G. W. F. Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, translated by Johnson and Struthers, Vol. I (Allen and Unwin/Macmillan, London, 1951), p. 35. (The larger *Logic*). ↵□

2.G. W. F. Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, Vol. I, p. 35. ↵□

3.G. W. F. Hegel, *The Logic of Hegel*, translated by William Wallace (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1931), p. 52. (The smaller *Logic*). ↵□

4.G. W. F. Hegel, *The Logic of Hegel*, p. 52. ↵□

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